

FAME ^{AND} FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

NEVER SAY DIE; OR, THE YOUNG SURVEYOR OF HAPPY VALLEY.

By A SELF-MADE MAN

AND OTHER STORIES



The sun was just setting behind the distant hills when Fred and Bert came unexpectedly upon a startling sight. Two weather-bleached corpses, with their arms bound together, lay as they had fallen on either side of a tree.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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NEVER SAY DIE

— OR —

THE YOUNG SURVEYOR OF HAPPY VALLEY

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

MAKES THE READER ACQUAINTED WITH FRED STUART, DORA DARLING AND LUKE JENKINS.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Stuart," said pretty Dora Darling, flashing a bewitching glance at a well-built, good-looking boy of seventeen, who at that moment came out of the Brentwood post-office. "How is your mother to-day?"

"Much better, I thank you," replied the boy, raising his hat with a pleased smile. "It was very kind of you to call on her yesterday. She appreciates it very much."

"Don't mention it. If I can be of any service to her I hope you will let me know."

"You are very good to say so," answered the boy, with a grateful look. "But I hope mother will be on her feet again in a day or two."

"I hope she will for your sake," replied the girl. "You are acquainted with Luke Jenkins, are you not?" indicating her escort, a stylishly-dressed youth of sixteen, who gave every evidence of having a very high opinion of himself.

"We have met," replied Fred Stuart, evasively.

Luke Jenkins himself entirely ignored the remark, tapping the toes of his patent leather shoes with the end of his natty rattan cane, as if impatient at the delay.

Dora Darling gave a quick glance at both boys, and then, seeming to realize the situation, smiled and extended her hand to Fred, remarking:

"We are going out for a sail on the river. Mr. Jenkins has a new boat, and he has honored me," laughingly, "with an invitation to take the first trip in her."

"I hope you will have a pleasant time," he answered, with a wistful look at the charming girl.

"Thank you, Mr. Stuart. I think I shall enjoy the sail very much, as I just dote on the water."

"I think we had better be going on, Miss Darling," interrupted Luke Jenkins, with a gesture of impatience, at the same time casting a contemptuous look at the other boy, whose plain but neat garments showed that he was several degrees lower in the social scale than Master Jenkins himself.

"Don't let me detain you, Miss Dora," said Fred, with a polite bow.

She smiled again, acknowledged his salute, and then the boy passed on his way.

"I can't understand what you see in that fellow to waste your time on him," said Luke, in a discontented tone, as they resumed their walk toward the Jenkins' home by the river.

"Why, what's the matter with Fred Stuart?" asked Dora, opening her pretty eyes in surprise.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Luke, with a snort of disgust. "He isn't a fit person for you to be on familiar terms with."

"Indeed!" replied the girl, with an indignant flush. "I think Fred Stuart the nicest and most gentlemanly boy in town."

She spoke with so much spirit and decision that Luke was quite taken aback.

"I can't say that I admire your taste," he replied, with a sneer. "Fred Stuart is a poor boy, and has to work for his living. You should consider your social standing, Miss Darling. Your parents would not like to know that you receive such a fellow on terms of equality."

"I wish you to understand, Mr. Jenkins, that I associate with nobody whom my parents do not approve of," answered Dora, spiritedly.

"Then I don't see why——"

"My father and mother sanction my acquaintance with Mr. Stuart."

"They do?" exclaimed Luke, with a gasp of discomfiture.

"Why should they not? He is a nice boy. If you knew him better you would agree with me."

"I have no desire to know him better," replied Luke, scornfully. "I don't care to have anything to do with persons in his class. I consider myself a gentleman," loftily.

"Then you don't regard Fred Stuart as a gentleman?" answered the girl, with a slight curl of her lips.

"I should say not," retorted Luke, emphatically. "He is only a common working boy, while I am the son of a rich man. There is all the difference in the world between us."

"I don't admit the difference," replied Dora, stoutly. "A boy may be poor, but he can still be a young gentleman. Fred Stuart is my ideal of what a gentleman ought to be. I have known him for some time, and his conduct has always been such as to entitle him to my respect and esteem. He is as good as gold to his mother, and any boy who treats his mother as he does is worthy of any one's friendship."

Luke Jenkins was evidently not much pleased with Dora's defense of Fred Stuart.

"Oh, he's all right, I dare say, in his way," he returned, with ill-grace; "but the barriers that divide our set from the common herd must be maintained. My father would not allow me to have anything to do with a poor boy, and my friends would be very much astonished if they saw me on familiar terms with such a person as Fred Stuart."

"You have a perfect right to select your associates, Mr. Jenkins. I believe I have the same privilege."

"Of course; but——"

"We will change the conversation, please," Dora said, with dignity.

"Certainly. What shall we talk about? My new boat? She's a beauty. I am sure you will admire her when you see her. My father gave her to me for a birthday present. I was sixteen last Wednesday."

"Were you, indeed? Why, I didn't think you were more than fifteen," she said, with a spice of mischief in her tones, for the airs Luke habitually assumed greatly amused her.

"I assure you I am sixteen," he said, as he strutted along by her side.

They now came in sight of the water, where the shady street ran gently down to the bank of Snake River.

This stream, whose serpentine course had given it its name, was swift and deep.

It took its rise in the mountains which hedged in Happy Valley on the north, ran its sinuous course as smooth as a millpond, except when ruffled by a lively breeze, for a matter of ten miles, when perhaps two score of bristling black rocks, shooting their heads just above the surface, turned it into a dangerous stretch of rapids a mile below Brentwood.

Several of the well-to-do residents of the town, which was the county seat, had built their homes on the shelving bank of the river, and this was the case with Abner Jenkins, Luke's father.

Mr. Jenkins was a prosperous lawyer.

He had got his start in life by marrying an heiress, and this good fortune put him on easy street.

He was a fair lawyer, and gradually established himself in Brentwood as the foremost legal luminary in the town-ship.

He was now attorney for the Happy Valley Rapid Transit Company, and his wife was the acknowledged leader of Brentwood's exclusive set.

Mr. Jenkins was a large, pompous-looking gentleman, who never went abroad without a heavy gold-headed cane in fair weather and a gold-handled silk umbrella when the sky looked threatening.

He held his head well up, as though he owned the town, and everybody else took from him their right to exist.

With such a shining example before him, it is small wonder that his son Luke, who was very much like him in many ways, and like his mother in others, thought himself the king pin among the rising generation of Brentwood.

He was inclined to patronize his social equals, look down on those a peg or two below him, and despise the general run of the people, whom he called the "common herd."

Dora Darling was the daughter of the cashier of the Brentwood National Bank.

Her people were as nice and as much respected as any one in town, but still they did not move in the "first circles," socially considered.

Dora was considered the prettiest girl in Brentwood, and therefore Luke Jenkins was attracted to her.

Privately he believed that he was honoring her with his notice, but he took care not to let her think so, for he found her as spunky and independent as she was charming, and he preferred her society to that of any other girl in the place.

As soon as he found she was fascinated with boat sailing, he induced his father to dispose of the ordinary sailboat they had and have a new one built on lines of greater beauty, comfort and safety.

It arrived on his birthday, two days before, and he had invited Dora to make the initial trip with him.

She was delighted with the idea and expected that the gardener of the Jenkins establishment, who was an old and experienced boatman, would manage the boat as he always did the old one, in which she had made a couple of trips.

Luke, however, had no intention of having a third party on board.

"There's a smacking breeze blowing," said Luke, as he opened the iron gate which admitted them to the spacious and well-kept grounds. "We shall have a bang-up sail."

He led the way down to the small wharf alongside of which the "Dora" was moored.

"Isn't she a dream!" exclaimed the girl, rapturously.

"I should say she is. The finest that money could buy. The governor spread himself when he gave the order to the builders, and they have turned out a crackerjack."

"She certainly is too lovely for anything."

"I had her named after you," said Luke, with a smirk, expecting that she would feel sensible of the honor he had conferred on her. "Look at the stern and you will see the word 'Dora' there in raised gilt letters."

She flushed a bit at this, but whether she was pleased or not he couldn't tell from her face.

"Step on board and I will show you into the cabin."

She permitted him to hand her down into the cockpit.

Then he unlocked the sliding panel and stepped down two brass-bound steps into a snug little cabin, finished in white and gilt.

"You have a splendid boat, Mr. Jenkins," she said, after she had seen everything and stepped out into the cockpit again.

"I'm glad you like her, Miss Darling. We will now test her sailing qualities, which the builder assured my father are tip-top," said Luke, beginning to remove the stops from the mainsail.

"But you haven't your man here," she said, in some surprise.

"What do we want him for?"

"Why, to sail the boat, of course."

"Oh, we don't need him. I can sail her all right myself," he said, proceeding with the work in hand.

"I didn't know that you could sail a boat," she answered in wonder.

"Sure, I can. I took lessons from William in the old boat while this one was building."

"Are you sure that you know how to handle a boat?" she asked, with some misgivings.

"Of course I do," he replied, confidently. "My governor wouldn't have bought her if he didn't know that I was learning the ropes."

Notwithstanding this assurance, Dora was clearly disquieted at the idea of trusting herself on the swift river with Luke alone.

"I would prefer that you ask the man to go with us," she said.

"Pshaw! I can sail her all right, Miss Darling."

"But think how terrible it would be if we got a spill in the river," she said, anxiously.

"Don't worry about that," he replied, seizing the halyards preparatory to hauling up the mainsail. "In any case this boat couldn't sink even if we tried to make her."

"Why not?"

"Because the governor had air-tight tanks put into her. She's a regular lifeboat in that respect."

"Is that really and truly so?" she asked, with a look of relief.

"It is. She wouldn't sink if she turned over, and I guess I'm not such a fool as to let her turn over."

He spoke so sincerely that she felt obliged to believe him.

"Where are those tanks?"

"Two of them are under the deck here, and he stamped on the floor of the cockpit. The other two are in the forward part of the cabin."

She was satisfied and made no further opposition to his getting the sailboat under way.

He hoisted the mainsail, ran up the jib, and then released the line which held her to the wharf.

The boat at once shot out into the river.

"Shall we go up or down?" he asked, as he took his seat beside the tiller.

"Either way suits me," she answered.

"Then we'll go down," he said. "Stoop as the boom swings over and seat yourself on this side."

She did as directed, and a moment later the "Dora" was darting down the river like a skimming seagull.

CHAPTER II.

IN DIRE PERIL.

When Fred Stuart left Dora Darling and her escort in front of the post-office, he kept on down Main street till he came to a small frame building, over the door of which hung the sign "John Fisher, Architect and Surveyor."

He entered and hung his hat on a convenient peg, thus showing that he was in some capacity connected with the office.

Another boy of about his own age, freckled-faced and sturdy, known as Bert Barlow, was seated at a table with a blue print before him from which he was laboriously making certain calculations on a sheet of white paper.

The only desk in the place, an oak rolled-top one, standing near a window overlooking a side street, was closed.

"Well, how are you getting on?" asked Fred, in a cheery

tone, glancing at the other boy as he took his seat at another table, littered with plans.

"So-so," replied the freckled-faced boy, with a comical grimace, which seemed to imply that he wasn't making any progress to speak of.

"Can't you make those estimates?"

"Oh, I'll get there one of these days."

"Want me to show you anything?"

"Well, you might figure those specifications out. It'll give me a lift."

"All right. I'll do that for you, Bert," said Fred, cheerfully.

There was silence in the office for a few minutes.

"Has Mr. Fisher been in?" asked Fred, as he handed over the results of his calculations.

"No. He went down to Jessup's."

"I know that. Anybody else been here?"

"Not a soul."

"Here's the boss now," said Fred, a few minutes later, as he glanced out of the front window.

Mr. Fisher opened the street door and entered.

"Been to the post-office yet, Fred?" he asked his chief assistant.

"Yes, sir. There was nothing in your box."

The architect opened his desk and seated himself.

"Look here, Fred. I want you to take this blue print to the foreman at the creek right away."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell him that the bridge extensions must be made to conform to these alterations, and that he must hurry things along, as the contract calls for the completion of the structure next Wednesday."

"All right, sir."

The boy took the drawing, placed it carefully in his pocket, put on his hat and started for Snake Creek, where Mr. Fisher was erecting a small bridge for the county.

The creek was an off-shoot of Snake River just above the rapids.

It was nearly two miles from the office, but he could take a trolley car on the Happy Valley Traction line, which would land him within three-quarters of a mile of his destination.

This Fred did, and reached the bridge about half-past four.

He handed the blue print to the foreman of the job, together with the verbal instructions, and after watching the workmen for a while, he decided to go down to the river, a short distance away, and take that road home, for the office closed at five and he was not expected to return there from the bridge.

The declining sun marked a golden pathway upon the surface of the river, and in the midst of it he saw a jaunty sailboat flying before the stiff breeze.

"That's Luke Jenkins' new boat, as sure as anything. Yes, I can see him steering her, with Dora Darling on the other side of the tiller. That boat is a beauty, and no mistake. What a lucky boy Luke is! With all his advantages one would think he'd be half-way decent to those who are not so well-placed in the world. Instead of which he treats most of us Brentwood fellows as if we were the scum of the earth. I don't see what he gains by it. I guess he's made himself the most unpopular boy in the township. If he can stand it I s'pose it's nobody's business but his own."

Thus mused Fred Stuart as he paused on the river bank and watched the graceful flight of the sailboat down the river.

Perhaps as he stood there and looked wistfully across the water at the dainty form of Dora Darling, he wished it were his luck to own such a handsome boat, and be able to sail the sun-kissed stream with the beautiful girl who, to tell the honest truth, occupied a very large share of his thoughts at times.

The realization of such happiness as that seemed as far away from him as the moon from the earth.

He was the only son of a widow in very ordinary circumstances.

He had no rich father or influential friends to push him ahead in the world.

His future was in his own hands to make or mar by his own efforts.

But he possessed pluck, energy and ambition to make his own way in the world, and no boy thus equipped for the battle of life need fear that he will not win success in the end and a position far above common.

The river narrowed at the point where Fred stood, and the boy thought it was high time that Luke shifted his helm

and came about on the opposite tack, for the light craft was drawing perilously near to the rapids.

"Ah, there goes his sheet at last," breathed Fred. "He seems to have held on till the last moment. He must have great confidence in his—good gracious!"

The exclamation was drawn from Fred by a sudden change in the aspect of affairs.

A sharp flaw from the other side of the river struck and careened the boat over as she came about.

The sheet attached to the end of the swinging boom escaped from Luke's hand and the boom itself swung away out at right angles with the boat and began to thrash about in the water.

To a cool and competent boatman this of itself would have been no great misfortune, especially as the boat was unsinkable; but Luke was a mere novice at the business, and he immediately lost his head.

This, however, was not the worst of the present case.

Something far more serious had occurred.

The sheet when it got away from Luke caught Dora around the arm as she started to spring to the windward side of the cockpit, and becoming entangled, the boom, as it swung outward, drew her in the twinkling of an eye out of the boat, and left her struggling in the swift embrace of the river.

Luke gazed after her with startled and distended eyes, but he seemed utterly unable to move a hand to save her from the almost certain death which faced her.

For a few moments the sheet held her like a great fish at the end of an angler's line, then it slipped from her arm, and she was borne away on the stream toward the rapids, a short distance below.

Her doom seemed certain, and yet at that moment a strong pair of arms were breasting the water to reach and save her if the feat were possible.

The moment Fred saw her drawn overboard by the action of the boom he understood her great peril, and prepared to go to her rescue at any hazard.

He threw off his coat, hat and shoes and sprang into the water.

Fortunately he was a fine swimmer and a strong one.

He made headway in spite of the current, which was carrying him below her.

He was half-way out to the boat, though twice that distance below, when the sheet released her, and she was carried away by the current.

Fred was not aware of this fact until, as he turned to swim up against the tide, he saw the girl sweeping by him as she came to the surface in a half-conscious condition.

"My heavens!" he groaned; "she'll be in the rapids in two minutes unless I can reach her. Even then the chances are good that we'll both be caught in that trap together."

He started down after her hand over hand, and reached her just as she was going under for the second time on the fringe of the white water which marked the outer margin of the rapids.

She lay limp and lifeless on his arm.

"Now to save her," he muttered between his teeth, as he struck out for the shore.

The task, however, was beyond him, for the water was swifter here than elsewhere, and his strength had already been sorely taxed.

He did the best he could, and fought against the strong current with every ounce of power that was in his sinewy arms; but the fight was too unequal, and, despite his exertions, he drifted into the boiling waters of the rapids.

Could he and Dora survive the trip through that seething cauldron alive with sharp-pointed rocks?

It hardly seemed possible.

A dozen unfortunate persons had at different times been drawn into that whirling waste of spume and rock, but not one had ever been known to come out alive in the calmer stretch below.

Fred didn't give up hope, even at that crucial moment.

The pluck inherent in him came to his aid and made him put up a game fight for his life, as well as for the life of his precious burden.

But it was impossible for him to entirely get beyond the danger zone.

He realized that fact at last as he saw they were being carried against one of the biggest rocks in the turbulent channel.

So he did the only thing he could do, and that was grasp a jutting point of the rock firmly as he was slipping by it and pull himself around against it.

Then, with the last of his waning strength, aided by his feet underneath, he succeeded in drawing himself and Dora half-way out of the water, and effecting a lodgment on the apex of the rock.

CHAPTER III.

SAVED FROM THE RAPIDS.

In the meantime Luke and his sailboat were in a ticklish position.

Completely dazed by the calamity which had happened, he stood in the cockpit and made no effort to recover the boom.

As a consequence the little craft drifted right down toward the rapids.

Fortunately for him, a boat rowed by two men came out of a small inlet on the opposite shore, and her occupants immediately noticed the precarious position of Luke and the "Dora."

They put off to the sailboat at once, reaching her just in the nick of time.

"How did you get into this scrape, young man?" asked one of the men, after they had got the boom aboard again.

Luke made no answer.

He was shivering with fright over the disappearance of Dora Darling, whom he believed to be drowned.

"Boys who don't understand how to manage a boat oughtn't to be allowed to go out alone in 'em," muttered the other man. "This is a dangerous as well as expensive toy for an inexperienced lad to monkey with, but," noting Luke's swell clothes, "rich men's sons seem to do about as they please."

"Don't go away from here," begged Luke, finding his tongue at last as the boat started up the river. "Look around and see if you can see her."

"See who?" asked the man who had taken charge of the tiller.

"Dora Darling."

"What about her?"

"She's overboard."

"Overboard!" exclaimed the helmsman, looking at his companion, who returned his stare, and then they both regarded the boy searchingly. "You don't mean to say that you had a girl with you in this boat, and that she fell into the water?"

"Yes, yes," replied Luke in a tone of distress. "The boom carried her overboard!"

"My heavens!" cried the helmsman in great excitement. "She must have been carried down into the rapids."

"There seems little doubt of that," replied his companion, peering over the water. "I'm afraid there's no hope for her now."

"Oh, dear; or, dear! I never can go home now," groaned Luke, wringing his hands in despair. "They'll say it was my fault."

The helmsman had altered the sailboat's course so as to carry her down toward the edge of the rapids.

Neither of the men had much hope of seeing any sign of the girl.

They knew only too well the dangers of that boiling stretch of water.

But with a human life at stake, they felt some effort must be made whether it promised anything or not.

In the meantime Fred Stuart was supporting himself and the unconscious Dora on the rock which he had been so fortunate as to reach without coming into actual collision with it.

Her head lay back on his shoulder, her eyes were closed, and she was very cold and pale.

Still he could see that she breathed, and he felt very much encouraged.

From their waists downward the white water churned itself around them, while the spray was blown into their faces.

"I must try and swim to the bank," breathed Fred, as he felt his strength coming back. "It is getting on to sundown, and we must get out of this somehow before dark."

At that moment Dora, with a little, fluttering sigh, opened her eyes.

Naturally she was dazed by the situation she found herself in.

She did not know where she was, nor understand the peril with which she was surrounded.

A face she seemed to know was close to hers and a pair of handsome, dark eyes were gazing down into her own.

What did it all mean?

"Where am I?" she fluttered. "What has happened to me?" "You fell overboard from Luke Jenkins' sailboat," replied Fred, answering her last question first. "I was standing on the bank of the river at the time, saw you fall into the water, and I did my best to save you from getting into the rapids. I did not succeed, so we are both in a pretty bad pickle, but I hope to get you out of it in a few moments. I am going to save you or go down the rapids with you."

She listened to him with dilated eyes, and seemed to understand the drift of his words.

"Fred Stuart!" she murmured. "Is it really you?"

"Yes, Dora, it is really I."

"I remember now that I was drawn overboard from the sailboat. I thought I was surely going to be drowned, for the water closed over my head, and I felt myself sinking down into the dark river," with a shudder. "And you have saved me, Fred Stuart?"

"I haven't saved you yet, but I hope to do it," he returned, encouragingly.

"Why, where are we? We are still in the water, aren't we?"

"We are on a rock in the midst of the rapids. We are in no immediate danger, but of course we can't remain here very long."

"Where is the sailboat?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I haven't thought about her. I'll look about."

He cast his eyes above the rapids and saw the boat sailing across the river.

Then he noticed that there were two men aboard of her besides Luke.

They were searching with their eyes the troubled waters of the rapids for some sign of Dora Darling.

Fred shouted to them, but the wind was against his voice and they did not hear him; neither did they seem to see him or his burden, for they were looking another way.

He could not wave either arm, as they were fully employed in holding on to the rock and in supporting Dora.

"It is strange how they missed seeing us," thought Fred.

He didn't reflect that the flying spray hid them every minute or two.

At length the boat pulled off and headed up the river.

They were abandoned to their fate.

"It's up to me now to save you, Dora," he said, as he watched the sailboat recede in the distance. "And I will do it or perish with you."

She had now come to realize the gravity of their situation, and knew that her only hope of ever seeing her dear parents again lay in the strong arm and courage of the brave boy who had already risked his life in her behalf.

Her eyes were fastened on his as he spoke.

"What chance have we of reaching shore?" she said with a calmness that surprised him.

"A fighting chance, I hope," he replied.

"If you were alone you could surely save yourself, couldn't you?" she asked.

"I am not certain even of that."

"But in trying to save me, too, you are jeopardizing yourself."

"Well, what of it? I came out to rescue you, and I'm going to do it if it can be done."

"But if you fail you may lose your own life, too."

"I can't help that. You don't suppose I would desert you, do you? I would be a contemptible coward for fair."

"Fred Stuart, you are the noblest boy in the world," she said, fervently. "I always liked you; but never so much as at this moment."

"And I have always liked you, Dora. You are not offended because I address you by your first name under the circumstances?"

"No," she answered, gently. "Why should I be? To me you seem almost like a brother."

"I wish I was your—"

He was going to say "brother," but suddenly checked himself.

Was it because he thought if he succeeded in saving her she might some day become even dearer to him than a sister?

"Well," he continued, abruptly. "are you ready to trust to my exertions to reach the shore? I am going to make the attempt now."

"I am ready," she replied, bravely.

"Then put your arms around my neck and hold on for your life."

As soon as he saw she had the proper hold he pushed off into the water and struck out for the shore.

For the next ten minutes he had a desperate fight for their lives.

The rushing tide swung them down among the foam-crested rocks, but he kept his eyes on the shore and battled manfully against the stream.

Foot by foot he made his way nearer and nearer to the bank, and after he had accomplished half the distance the scales began to turn in his favor.

The worst part of the rapids had been passed, and the trend of the river help them shoreward.

Putting the remainder of his strength into a final effort, he swam as he never swam before in his life, and in three minutes he touched bottom, and in another he was dragging Dora up on the shelving bank.

The fight had been won, and with this knowledge to comfort him he dropped exhausted on the solid ground close to the river's edge.

CHAPTER IV.

FRED GOES HOME AND SUBSEQUENTLY VISITS MRS. DARLING.

In a few moments he was conscious that Dora was kneeling beside him, had raised his head on her lap and was chafing his temples as if she thought he had fainted.

He struggled to a sitting posture, deeply grateful to Heaven that they had escaped alive from the river.

"How do you feel, Dora?" he asked, a bit anxiously.

"I feel dreadfully wet and uncomfortable," she replied with a faint smile. "I also feel very, very grateful to you, Fred Stuart, for saving my life. I shall never forget what you have done for me as long as I live. I know I can never repay you."

"Yes, you can," he said, unconsciously slipping one arm around her waist. "Do you want to?"

"Why, how can I?" she asked in surprise.

"By giving me just one kiss," he replied, boldly.

A crimson glow suffused her pale cheeks and she looked down much embarrassed.

"You say I saved your life. Am I asking too great a reward? If I am, pardon me. I would not offend you for all the gold in the world," he said, earnestly.

He looked at her a moment, and as she remained silent he was about to rise when he looked up and she said gently:

"You may kiss me."

He put his arm around her again, drew her unresistingly toward him and kissed her on the lips.

"May I call you Dora after this?"

"Yes."

"And will you call me Fred?"

"If you wish me to."

"I do. Now I will take you to the nearest house. You cannot go all the way home in this dripping state. You can stay with the people until I can go home, change my clothes, go to your home and tell your mother what occurred, assure her that you are safe and bring you dry garments to put on."

Dora made no objection to this arrangement, and Fred picked up his jacket, hat and shoes, which he found where he had discarded them.

They had to walk a quarter of a mile to a neat cottage close to the river, where the girl was at once received and accorded every attention that her condition required, while Fred went on toward Brentwood, walking at a brisk pace to keep his blood in circulation and ward off a possible cold.

"Why, Fred, where have you been?" exclaimed his mother, on catching sight of his bedraggled appearance as he entered the house.

"I've been in the river, mother," he replied with a laugh, as he kissed her and then backed away so that she might not come in contact with his wet clothes.

Mrs. Stuart was just recovering from a severe illness, and looked somewhat pale and weak.

She was seated in a plain rocker by the window overlooking the little garden which lay between their unpretentious cottage and the street.

Fred had hired a little girl, a neighbor's daughter, to come in and attend to the housework and do such plain cooking as was necessary while his mother was under the weather.

"In the river!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, aghast.

"Yes, mother. Dora Darling was out sailing in Luke Jenkins' new boat. An accident happened, and she was thrown into the water just above the rapids. I saw the peril she was in, jumped into the river, and after a good deal of

trouble succeeded in getting her out. I'll tell you the particulars later on, as I want to change my clothes now. Then I've got to go down to her home and tell her folks and take dry clothes to the cottage where I left her."

"I hope you won't catch cold after your bath, my son," said his mother, anxiously.

"Oh, I guess not, mother," replied Fred, with an air of confidence. "I kept on a kind of jog trot all the way up here, and my blood is all in a glow."

"Then don't delay changing your garments."

Inside of ten minutes Fred came downstairs rigged out from head to foot in dry clothes.

Then his mother insisted that he have his supper before he went over to the Darling home, a few blocks away.

He didn't waste many minutes over it, for it was quite dark now, and he guessed that Dora's parents must be uneasy over her absence, for they knew she left home with the expectation of going on the river in the new sailboat, though her mother never would have consented to the arrangement if she had suspected Luke did not intend to take his boatman with them.

Mrs. Darling opened the front door herself.

"Good-evening, Mr. Stuart," she said with a pleasant smile. "I thought it was Dora. Luke Jenkins persuaded her to take a sail on the river in his new boat this afternoon, and she hasn't got home yet. I am beginning to feel a little anxious about her, though I dare say that's silly of me, as she may have been invited to stay to tea at the Jenkinses. Come in."

Fred entered the pleasant sitting-room.

"You will probably be surprised, Mrs. Darling, when I tell you I have come from your daughter with a message," began Fred.

"Indeed! It can't be that anything has happened to her?" she replied in some alarm.

"There is no reason for you to be frightened, Mrs. Darling. I assure you that, aside from a good ducking in the river, she is all right."

"Do you mean to tell me that Dora fell out of young Jenkins' boat into the river?"

"I am sorry to say she did."

Mrs. Darling turned white.

"And where is Dora now?" she asked in nervous tones.

"At a small cottage near the river, about a mile and a half from here."

"I must go to her at once," said the lady, rising in an agitated way.

"It is not necessary that you should go, Mrs. Darling. I will see that she gets home safe and sound. I will take her a bundle of dry clothes if you will make it up for me, and as soon as she is dressed she will come back with me."

"You are quite sure she escaped without injury?"

"Yes, Mrs. Darling."

"Do you know how the accident happened? Did the boat upset?"

"The trouble occurred through Luke's mismanagement as he started to alter the boat's course just above the rapids."

"But he had the boatman with him, didn't he?"

"No, he did not. He told Miss Dora that he could sail the craft all right himself, and assured her that the boat couldn't sink, which may be quite true, as I understand that she has air-tight tanks built into her. She didn't want to go with him alone at first, but he talked her into it."

"The silly child!"

"When the boom swung around as the boat came about on a new tack the rope attached to the end of it, and which Luke held in his hand, slipped out of his grasp. In some way it caught about Miss Dora's arm and she was dragged into the water."

Mrs. Darling clasped her hands and shuddered.

"And how was she saved?"

"Well, fortunately I happened to be standing on the bank nearly opposite the boat at the time, so I jumped into the river and pulled her out."

Fred was too modest to go into the circumstances of the case, and made his story as brief as possible.

"How can I thank you enough, Mr. Stuart?" exclaimed Dora's mother, little thinking how much she really owed the brave boy seated by her side. "My daughter might have been drowned but for you. You may be sure we shall always feel very grateful to you for what you did for our dear child."

"Don't mention it, Mrs. Darling. I don't think I did any more than my duty."

"You must be a good swimmer. I have always dreaded Snake River—the current is so swift. Did you not say the accident happened near the rapids?"

"I did. It is a very dangerous locality."

"It is indeed. I am so thankful Dora escaped so easily. She ought not to have trusted herself in that boat without the boatman was on board. Is Luke Jenkins with her at the cottage?"

"He is not. He went home in his sailboat soon after the mishap."

"When did it take place?"

"About half-past four."

"Three hours ago. If he left for his home so soon I wonder he didn't come right over here and tell me all about the affair. Surely he has had time enough to do so."

"I guess he didn't have the courage to do it. He really doesn't know that Dora has been saved from the river."

"Doesn't know it!" almost gasped Mrs. Darling. "Why, what do you mean?"

"I'm afraid he believes Miss Dora was drowned."

"Didn't he see you go to her assistance?"

"No," replied Fred, shaking his head. "He was too much frightened at the time. If a couple of men hadn't turned up to his aid it is probable both he and his boat would have gone down the rapids, and he might have lost his life."

"But you say he went home in his boat immediately after the accident. Surely he wouldn't have done that if he hadn't known that my child was safe, for she was presumed to be in his care while on the boat. I should have thought he would have wanted to carry her right home with him."

"The men who were in the boat with him sailed about the spot trying to catch sight of Miss Dora. I saw them plainly, for at the time I was clinging to a rock with your daughter, who was unconscious. They didn't see us, and finally they gave up the search and headed the sailboat for Brentwood."

"I don't know what to think of Luke Jenkins," replied Mrs. Darling. "If he abandoned Dora in such a shameful manner I shall never want to see him in this house again. Nor will my child have anything further to do with him."

"Well, you can talk with your daughter about that. If you will prepare that bundle I will carry it to her at once. Then you may expect me back with her in an hour or so."

Mrs. Darling hastened to get the bundle ready, and Fred left with it at once.

An hour and a half later he left the girl at her home, politely refusing to go in this time, in spite of Dora's entreaties, for he didn't want to be made a hero of.

CHAPTER V.

FRED AND BERT START ON A SURVEYING EXPEDITION.

On the following afternoon Dora Darling and her mother called at the Stuart cottage to see Mrs. Stuart.

Both of them had a great many pleasant things to say about Fred's gallant conduct of the previous afternoon, and these things naturally pleased Mrs. Stuart, who thought no boy quite as good as her own.

Before they left they insisted that Fred and his mother must dine with them on Sunday afternoon, and this invitation Mrs. Stuart accepted, her health permitting.

Fred, when he got home after his day's work at the office, was very much pleased with the arrangement, and he hoped nothing would interfere to prevent it from being carried out.

Nothing did interfere, for when Sunday came Mrs. Stuart was very much better, so Fred and she set out for the Darling home at three o'clock.

They were received with great cordiality, and enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon and evening.

This was especially the case with Fred, who monopolized Dora's society until it was time for them to go home.

Next morning soon after Fred began work at his table Mr. Fisher came in, and, calling him to his desk, told him that he had a job of surveying on hand among the hills at the upper part of the valley.

"I am satisfied that you are perfectly competent to do this work, Fred," he said. "You are thoroughly up in both the theory and practice of surveying. Since you have been with me you have shown uncommon aptitude for the business. I have watched your work while you were out with me on our little expeditions, and have noted how easily you picked up all the details, and how correct you were in your calculations. Therefore I am confident that you can do the work as well as I. This will permit me to attend to other matters with which you know I am crowded at the present time. You will want

an assistant, of course, so you can take Bert with you. I believe you know how to handle a sailboat, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. You and Bert will take Barclay's catboat, then, and go up the river as far as Swan Creek. You can then follow the ravine down to the vicinity of the lake. Now I will give you your instructions."

Half an hour later Fred, carrying the theodolite, and Bert, burdened with the rod, target, transit and chains, started for Joe Barclay's boathouse on the river.

They found the catboat all ready for them, for Mr. Fisher had engaged it early that morning, so all they had to do was to put their instruments aboard, hoist sail and start off.

Fred sat at the tiller, for he was a fairly experienced boatman.

He had a natural liking for the water, and had enjoyed many opportunities on the river to make himself familiar with both the theory and practice of sailing small boats.

In the present instance his knowledge stood him in good stead, as it was much more convenient to reach the locality he and his companion were bound for by way of the river than by the road, which did not go all the way to the lake, but branched off through the farming district to the northwest.

Then it would take at least two days to complete the survey, and consequently the boys expected to use the cabin of the catboat as a place of shelter for one night at least.

Sufficient supplies to last them for three days if necessary had been sent to the boat by Mr. Fisher, and Barclay had loaned them a small cooking appliance with which they could cook any fish they might catch in the lake, which was well stocked with a certain species of the finny tribe, as well as make a pot of coffee.

"We ought to have a rattling good time on this trip, Fred," said Bert, enthusiastically. "A heap sight better than working in the office like we've been doing."

"That depends on how well you like hard work out-of-doors. Don't imagine that surveying is such a cinch, old man. There's lots of labor about it, as you'll find out before you're through."

"Well, it's a change at any rate. I'm willing to put in my best licks for the fun of camping out for a couple of days," replied Bert with a grin. "I only wish it was to take two weeks instead of two days."

"Ever camped out before?" asked Fred.

"Never. But I've always ached for a chance to do so. It will be fun cooking our own meals."

"Can you cook?"

"Can I cook?"

"That's what I asked you."

Bert scratched his head and looked at his companion with a dubious expression on his freckled face.

"I never have done any cooking," he admitted slowly. "Mother and the girls always look after that at home."

"Then, if you don't know the first thing about preparing a meal how would you expect to cook a mess of fish, for instance?"

"Oh, that would be easy," replied Bert, confidently.

"I'm glad to hear it," laughed Fred. "How would you set about it?"

"Oh, I'd light the oil stove, put the pan on, the fish in the pan, and leave 'em there till they got brown."

"You would?"

"Sure thing. Ain't I read lots of stories about fellows camping out in the woods, and that's the way they did, only instead of a stove they had a fire built on the ground."

"Wouldn't you open the fish and clean them first?"

"Gee! I never thought of that?"

"Wouldn't you put a bit of butter or lard in the pan before you put in the fish, so that they wouldn't burn? And would you think of salting them just enough to make them palatable?" said Fred, in an amused tone.

"Say, I guess you know how to cook some, don't you?"

"A little."

"Well, I don't know anything at all, so suppose you attend to the matter?"

"Why, I thought you said it would be easy? And if it's so easy you ought to do your share of it," laughed Fred.

"Well, I thought it was easy. It always looks that way in story books. The boys seemed to have no trouble at all. They just shot a bird or two, plucked off the feathers and popped it right into a pan or a pot, generally a pot, I think, and then when somebody said the birds were cooked to a turn they ate 'em up and seemed to enjoy their meal hugely."

"Well, you ought to know that the authors of the stories

don't go into the preliminaries. It is taken for granted that the birds, or fish, or whatever it is they have for their dinner, are properly cooked. When you're reading a story you don't want to have to go into the dry details of the thing."

"That's right," assented Bert.

"It isn't necessary to state how much coffee and how much boiling water it takes to make several cups of coffee, nor mention the different stages through which fish or fowl have to pass before they are turned out done to a turn, as the story writers term it. When a number of boys make up their minds to go out camping for a week or so, one of them at least will find it profitable to take a few lessons in cookery from his mother or sister beforehand. Otherwise there'll be something doing when they try to prepare a meal on the go-as-you-please principle."

"I guess you're right, Fred."

"I don't profess to be any great shakes of a cook, but I know enough to get up a half-way decent meal. So you just watch me, when we reach the creek, and I'll give you a few points on the art."

"Bet your life I will. I'd like to know how to do it myself."

"What have we got aboard in the shape of eatables, anyway?"

"I'll look," replied Bert.

He went into the small cabin and investigated the contents of the boxes which stood on the floor.

"There's a lot of ham sandwiches to begin with and some hard-boiled eggs."

"That's good. So much cooking saved."

"There's a dozen uncooked eggs and a couple of pounds of raw bacon."

"First-class. We can have bacon and eggs for supper to-night."

"Sure we can. That's my favorite dish. Then there's a package of coffee, a can of condensed milk already opened, some butter, a loaf of bread and a number of other things, such as salt, pepper, etc."

"We're not likely to starve, even if we don't catch any fish."

"I should say not. But have we got any fishlines aboard?"

"Yes. Mr. Barclay said there were two in the right-hand locker."

"Then we're fixed up in fine shape. Say, Fred, couldn't we squeeze another day out of this job? The country is kind of rough up in the hills, isn't it?"

"I think it is."

"We could say that we couldn't finish up in two days owing to the condition of the surroundings."

"We could say a good many things," replied Fred; "but I'm not going to make any false statements to Mr. Fisher. That wouldn't be the square thing to do, Bert. Remember he is paying us for our time up here, and if we took a day more than was actually necessary we should to all intents and purposes be defrauding him of just so much money. I know you wouldn't knowingly do that, Bert."

"No; that's right. I didn't think of the thing in that light."

CHAPTER VI.

FROM SWAN CREEK TO CLEAR LAKE BY WAY OF THE RAVINE.

The wind was rather light, and as the river had a good many bends in it, it took the boys some time to reach Swan Creek.

"What time is it?" asked Bert, after they had hauled down the sail and moored the catboat to the shore at the head of the creek.

Fred looked at his watch.

"It is one o'clock," he said.

"Hello! Where did you get that gold repeater?" asked Bert, opening his eyes as he noticed the fine gold self-winder that Fred displayed.

"Where did I get it?"

"Yes; where did you get it? I never saw you have anything but a silver watch before."

"Well, that timepiece was presented to me yesterday."

"The deuce you say. I wish somebody would present me with one."

"It's a fine one, isn't it?"

"Bet your life it is. Who was so good as to give you such a valuable turnip?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Darling."

"Oh, I see. They gave it to you for pulling Dora Darling out of the rapids. Well, you earned it all right. I wouldn't take the risk you did for a bushel of gold watches."

"Neither would I. I went into the water to save Dora from drowning. I didn't look for nor expect a reward for doing that."

"But you got it just the same," grinned Bert.

"I certainly couldn't refuse to accept this token of her parents' gratitude when they had bought it especially for me, could I?"

"Well, hardly. It's a bully one all right."

"I'm very much pleased with it," replied Fred, returning the elegant watch to his vest pocket. "Now, old man, just carry that stove ashore and I'll start in and cook a pot of coffee. That, with some sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, will answer for the present, I guess."

Bert watched Fred prepare the coffee with some interest, and when it was ready he declared it was as good as he had ever drank at home.

"You're all to the good as a cook, Fred," he said, enthusiastically.

"Oh, come, now, aren't you just a trifle too quick in praising me? Maybe you'll feel like singing a different tune when you taste my bacon and eggs."

"I'm willing to take the chances," grinned Bert, as he finished his last sandwich.

"All right," replied Fred. "Let's get busy."

He stepped aboard the catboat and got his theodolite, leaving the rest of the implements to his assistant to carry.

"Mr. Fisher told me to follow the ravine to the lake," remarked Fred, as he started off into the thicket.

"Where is the ravine?" asked Bert.

"It must be somewhere about here."

They walked straight ahead at a venture. Fred in the lead, and before they knew they had entered the ravine they found themselves in a narrow gully-like enclosure which seemed to answer to the description.

"We seem to have struck it all right," said Fred.

"I can't say that I'm dead stuck on it as a place to walk through with the load I have."

"I thought you considered this all fun?" grinned his companion.

"This part of it isn't fun," grunted Bert, as he stepped around a big rock. "The place is full of brush, decayed trees, rocks, and I don't know what. I'll need a new pair of shoes when I get back to Brentwood. Do you think there's any wild animals in these hills?"

"No. What put that idea in your head?" asked Fred.

"I thought there might be. This place looks like a wilderness. It's a wonder there wouldn't be a few Indians about."

"How would you like to meet one with his war paint on and a tomahawk in his hand, eh?" laughed Fred.

"Not on your tintype. I like to read about 'em in stories, but that is as far as my curiosity goes. Say, how much further have we got to go in this ravine?"

"Ask me something easy, Bert. I never was here before."

"Didn't Mr. Fisher tell you?"

"He said the distance between the creek and the lake was about three miles."

"I'd be willing to swear I've walked six already. Hold on, let's take another rest."

Fred was willing, for the afternoon was warm, and he admitted that the walking was anything but good.

"I should think we might find a better way to go and come than this," said Bert as he mopped the perspiration from his brow.

"We can look for a better way, but I guess this must be the shortest, or Mr. Fisher wouldn't have told me to take it."

"Was he ever up here?"

"I couldn't tell you, but I think he surveyed the next section to the one we have to tackle, for he told me where to look for a stake from which to make our start."

"What are we surveying this wild man's domain for, anyway?"

"Some capitalist has taken an option on a portion of the property about the lake shore with the idea of buying it and putting up a summer hotel."

"A summer hotel! Suffering jewsharps! How are the guests going to get there? There isn't any road running within two miles of the lake."

"A road can be built, can't it? It is only a question of time when one will be cut through, anyway."

"Well, the nearest railroad town is four miles below Brentwood on the river, and Brentwood is all of nine miles in a

straight line from the lake, so I've heard. If there was only a town in the neighborhood of the creek, people wishing to stop at a hotel on the lake could come up there by boat. Then a road could be built alongside of this ravine—a nice shady road, for there are a heap of trees around here, and the hotel man could bring the people over in his stage."

"The trolley is going to be extended to Taylorville, four miles north of Brentwood, next spring. The turnpike itself runs past Jayburg, which lies two miles from the lake and five miles northwest of Taylorville. A road built from Jayburg to the lake will afford direct communication to and from Creston."

"Sure. But look at the distance—fifteen miles."

"What's the odds? Guests will come to the lake early in summer and probably stay three months. They'll only have to travel the road once each way."

"And suppose they have a lot of trunks?"

"The trolley will carry them to Taylorville as soon as it is built and goes into operation to that place. That leaves only four miles for them to be carried the rest of the distance on a wagon."

"But don't you think it would be ever so much better if there was a wharf at the creek and a road from the creek to the lake, and then, as I said before, the people could come up the river on a small steamboat."

"There wouldn't be enough travel to pay for the coal used. Now, if the river ran right through here in place of this ravine, and connected direct with the lake, the hotel man could provide himself with a steam launch to bring his guests and their baggage up from Creston without change. Then he could use the launch to take the people on short daily excursions around the lake."

"That would be fine," cried Bert. "If the river only ran through here we wouldn't be compelled to take this long walk, but could come the whole way on our boat."

"But the river doesn't run through here, so what's the use of talking about it?"

"Well, all I've got to say is that if the river had any sense, it would not run this way, but send a fork through, if only to oblige us and the man who is going to build the hotel."

"He may not build it, after all. It all depends on the survey, I guess."

A short walk further and they ascended an elevation that brought them in sight of as pretty a body of water as any one could wish to see.

CHAPTER VII.

A STARTLING SIGHT.

Clear Lake was situated in a hollow surrounded on every side by the wooded hills which marked the northern boundary of Happy Valley.

It ran in and out among the elevations which jutted into its waters like so many promontories.

In some places it was wildly picturesque, in others serenely beautiful.

As a whole, the spot needed only development to attract attention.

"I'd like to camp out here for a month," cried Bert, with great ardor.

"So would I with a gun and rod," replied Fred.

"Is there anything to shoot?"

"I'll bet the underbrush is full of rabbits."

"Say, what's the matter with our coming here when we get our vacation?" asked Bert, eagerly.

"Mr. Fisher might not let us both off at the same time. He's very busy this year, and I expect things will be lively all summer."

"Well, we can try and fix it with him somehow."

"I hope so. I wouldn't object to a week up in this section, say during August or September."

"I'll leave the matter for you to arrange. The boss thinks a lot of you, and I guess you can work him around to look at the idea in the right way."

"I'll see what I can do about it. Now you sit down here and hold my instrument. I'm going to hunt for that stake. Here's a piece of chamois. You can amuse yourself brightening up the instruments."

After a short search Fred found a hard-wood stake wedged in between two rocks.

This marked the section which had been surveyed two years before.

He called Bert up.

"You see this stake?" asked Fred.

"Sure I do. It's plain enough, isn't it?"

"This marks the section joining on to the one the hotel man has the option on. From here we strike a line due west. Fit the tripod and get the chain ready."

Fred got his level, and sighting through the telescope told Bert to carry the steel chain to a certain point.

They worked with such good result that by sundown they had staked off the hotel man's eighty acres, reaching from the lake back to a line beyond the crest of the hills.

"Are we done now?" asked Bert in a tone of disappointment. "I thought it would take all day to-morrow."

"We're not done yet. We've only got the section divided off."

"What else is there to do?"

"I've got to find a suitable site for the hotel buildings."

"Ho! Can't he build the hotel anywhere within the eighty acres?"

"Of course. But the man wants to put the big building up at a reasonable cost. You must have noticed that this spot is almost all rock. He doesn't want to pay out thousands of dollars on leveling and excavating."

"Oh, I see."

"If there's no place near enough to the lake to build a hotel at a fair expenditure I suppose he'll give up the scheme."

"And it's up to you to pick out such a spot, eh?"

"If it is here, yes."

"And if it isn't?"

"That's not our funeral. All I have to do is to make my report to Mr. Fisher. If it is favorable I suppose the hotel will be put up. If it isn't—"

"It won't," grinned Bert. "I'm getting hungry. My mouth is watering for fried bacon and eggs; but I hate to walk all the way back through that ravine. Can't we leave some of these things here?"

"Yes," and Fred indicated what part of their outfit could be left in the hollow of a big tree near the lake.

Then they took up their line of march for the ravine, and before it was dark reached the creek where the catboat lay just as they had left her.

Fred cooked the bacon and eggs in what Bert called "bang-up" style, and the two boys made a hearty meal.

They sat in the cockpit of the boat for an hour talking about what they would do if they spent a week's vacation up here in the wilds, and then growing sleepy they turned in for the night in the little cabin, which was fitted up with a couple of berths, one on either side on top of the lockers.

They were up with the birds next morning, and after breakfast started at once for the scene of the previous day's operations.

Fred went over the ground carefully.

The place was very romantic, but was so rocky that the results were disappointing.

Finally he found one site several hundred feet square that he thought might answer.

So he took his theodolite, which is an instrument for measuring distances, and by means of the glass and the arc determined the height of various points in the broken landscape.

Then he estimated the depth of rock.

"I'm afraid it won't do," he said to Bert. "However, that's for the hotel man to decide. It's up to him."

"Is this the most suitable place in the whole eighty acres?"

"Yes."

"It's tough if it won't do," replied Bert. "I think it's a swell place for a hotel."

"There's a better spot yonder; but that's outside this section."

"Why don't you investigate it, then?"

"Because we have nothing to do with anything outside this piece of ground."

"Well, if it was me, I'd do it just for the curiosity of finding out whether it would fill the bill or not. Unless you mean to go right back to Brentwood after we've had our lunch, why, we could put in the afternoon here."

"There's no call for us to hurry back right away, as the day would be practically over by the time we reached town. We'll stay in this neighborhood till sundown, and as the moon will be up by eight o'clock, we can sail down the river in the moonlight. That will be a chance for us."

"That suits me," answered Bert, in a tone of satisfaction. "Let's eat our lunch now. Then we can leave our instruments here and take a squint about the hills."

Fred agreed, and they seated themselves on a log, took out their ham sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, and enjoyed a pleasant al fresco meal.

After they were rested Fred decided to carry out Bert's idea of examining the site on the adjoining section which seemed to fill the bill for a hotel site better than any spot on the eighty acres he had just surveyed.

He carried the plan out, made his calculations and deductions and then placed the results in his pocketbook for future reference.

"What do you think about it?" asked Bert.

"If it was me that was going to build a hotel here that's the place I'd select. That's about the only place I've seen around here that is pretty free of rock and other expensive obstructions. It commands a beautiful and unobstructed view of the lake, and the waterfront, you will notice, has a fine sweeping curve to yonder point, while the beach is wider right under that cliff and offers an ideal stretch for the erection of bathhouses for still-water bathing. In a word, Bert, this spot is, in my opinion, a hundred per cent. better for a hotel site than any location on the ground we came here to survey."

"Are you going to offer the suggestion to the hotel man, through Mr. Fisher?"

"No. Why should I? If there was any money in it for me I would."

"You might hint that you could point out a certain spot with such advantages as you have mentioned."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't look well for me to do that. I wish I had enough money to buy this section, as I think it's the best along the lake."

"It oughtn't to cost so much in this wilderness."

"It would depend on whether the owner recognized the special advantage of the spot or not, and whether he is holding it for a future rise."

"Why don't you find out who owns it, whether it's for sale, and what the lowest price is. If it's low you might borrow the money from Mr. Darling. He'd let you have any reasonable sum, I'll bet, if he had it to spare."

"No. When I go into any speculation it must be with my own money. I don't want to be under obligations to any man to help me get ahead in the world. I'll make my own way myself. That's the only right way to succeed."

They spent the afternoon wandering about the hills and lake front, and when they got tired they returned to the spot where they had left their instruments, and, taking possession of them, started for the creek by a route to the south of the ravines.

They found that the change wasn't so much better, as the ground was quite hilly and there were many trees and big boulders to avoid.

They were resting in a little hollow among the rock when Bert suddenly cried:

"Well, what do you think of that?"

"What are you talking about?" asked Fred.

Bert pointed to a sign nailed to a tree a short distance away.

The board was weather-beaten and mildewed, as if it had been there for some years, but still the words were plainly decipherable.

The boys read them as follows:

"No trespassing, under the penalty of the law."

"What does a man want to put such a sign as that up way out here? Does he imagine a person will hurt his old ground by walking on it or resting against the stones? He must be one of those hogs that would order the rest of the people off the earth if he came into possession of it."

"Well, the owner of these diggings has a legal right to warn every one off, but, like yourself, I don't see the sense of it in this locality. Let's be going."

The boys got up and started again.

The sun was just setting behind the distant hills when Fred and Bert came unexpectedly upon a startling sight.

Two weather-bleached corpses, with their arms bound together, lay as they had fallen on either side of a tree.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Fred. "What's this?"

Bert, however, was too paralyzed to utter a word.

CHAPTER VIII.

IS FINDINGS KEEPINGS?

The boys gazed down at the withered corpses in great amazement, if not consternation.

In such a lonesome spot at that hour of the afternoon their presence looked singularly weird.

Beside each of the dead men was a bag, apparently full of something, tied at the mouth.

The soft-crowned hat of one of the men lay on the ground, almost in reach of his hand.

"This looks mighty like a murder," breathed Fred, in a solemn tone.

"That's what it does," admitted Bert, in shaky tones.

"They were tied by both arms to that tree, and left to perish of starvation in the most cruel manner," said Fred, his voice quivering with indignation as the terrible fate of these poor fellows struck fully home to him. "The men guilty of such an outrage must be pretty hard-hearted."

Bert thought so, too, though he didn't say anything.

Fred laid down his surveying instrument, and examined the corpses closer.

"They've been here undiscovered a pretty long time," he went on. "They are reduced to dried skin and bone."

"That shows that people very seldom come into this locality."

"Oh, I don't know about that. We'd have passed them by if we'd gone a few yards in either direction. We'll have to report this to the head constable in town, though I daresay the matter properly concerns the Jayburg authorities, as that is the nearest town. However, we're not going to tramp away up there at this hour. We'll put the information up to our constable, and let him attend to this affair."

"I wonder what's in those bags?" asked Bert, curiously.

"Some of their duds, I guess."

"They look kind of solid."

Fred stooped down and started to lift the nearest one.

"I should think this one was solid," he said, for he had to exert his strength to pick it up. "It must weigh seventy or eighty pounds."

"What can be in it?" cried Bert.

"I've a great mind to look," said Fred.

"Go on," encouraged his companion.

"Seems a kind of uncanny thing to do," replied the young surveyor, doubtfully.

Bert was much more willing for Fred to open the bag than to do it himself.

In fact, if he had been there alone he never would have touched either of them, but would have left the place in short order.

"Suppose you open the other bag while I'm looking into this?" suggested Fred.

"Nixy."

"Well, here goes," said Fred, getting out his jack-knife.

He slit the cord which held the ends of the bag together.

The folds of cloth fell apart and revealed—a pile of discolored gold coin.

If a dozen snakes had jumped out of the bag the two boys would have been less surprised.

They gazed at the money, dumfounded for a minute or two.

"If this doesn't beat the Dutch," cried Fred. "A bag full of money."

"The other must be full of gold, too," said Bert, emboldened to step forward and heft it. "Yes, it's heavy as lead. Gee whiz, what a find!"

"This is the strangest thing I ever saw or heard of. The men couldn't have tied themselves. One would think that the villains who did the deed perpetrated it in order to rob these chaps of this money. If that was their object, why should they go off and leave the money beside their victims?"

Fred scratched his head as if the problem was too deep for even his bright brains to solve.

"It's derved funny, isn't it?" said Bert, hauling the second bag in his direction, and regarding it with a longing eye.

"It isn't funny at all—it's mighty mystifying, that's what it is," returned the young surveyor.

"Well, what's the use trying to find the reason. The money is ours, isn't it, since we have found it. There must be five or six thousand dollars in each of these bags. You and I are rich."

"I don't think we have a right to keep it," said Fred, doubtfully.

"Why not? Who has a better right?"

"These men may have wives and families somewhere. The money ought to go to them."

"Ho! They look like tramps to me. Besides, there's no way of identifying them. Do you mean you'd be such a chump as to turn that coin over to a constable? I should hope not. I wouldn't anyhow."

"Well, we can take it along with us, of course, and when

we're satisfied that it belongs to us by right of discovery we can use it in any way we see fit."

"Don't you worry about it not belonging to us. I've got my flukes on this bag, and it will take a team of horses to get it away from me."

"It's getting dark, so we'd better hurry along. Wait a moment till I tie my bag up again."

It was nearly eight o'clock by Fred's watch when they finally reached the creek.

Bert was so excited over the possession of so much money which he considered as rightfully his own that he had very little appetite for supper, notwithstanding the tramping he had done that day, and the lightness of their lunch.

All the way back he could do nothing else but talk about what he was going to do with that money.

Fred's appetite, however, was not particularly affected by the bag of gold which had so unexpectedly come his way.

He simply dropped it into the locker under the bunk he had occupied, and taking the oil stove ashore, started in to fry the balance of the bacon and six of the remaining eggs, after he had first made the coffee, and set it on the second burner to keep warm.

"Why don't you eat, Bert?" he asked, when they sat down to their evening meal, and his companion seemed to go to sleep over his portion.

"I'm thinking about that money."

"Are you? You haven't been doing anything else since we left the spot where we found it. It isn't going to run away."

"I don't suppose it is; but it's an awful lot of coin for a fellow like me to possess."

"Well, what are you going to do with it when you get back to town?"

"What are you going to do with yours?" asked Bert, Yankee fashion.

"That isn't answering my question."

"I'm going to take it home, of course. What would you think I'd do with it? Leave it on the boat here for Barclay to find?"

"Hardly that."

"I've answered your question, now answer mine."

"I'm going to take my bag home, too; but I'm not going to touch it till I find out something about it."

"Then you won't touch it for a mighty long while," replied Bert, emphatically. "You'll never learn anything about it."

"How do you know I won't?"

"Those men will be buried as soon as the authorities find out the bodies are there. That'll be the end of them. They are a couple of tramps who found that money somewhere, and that's all there is to it."

"Found it, eh? Why, where would they find so much money? Stole it, you'd better say. We must investigate and see if we can find who it was who lost that money."

"Oh, I say, what do you want to do? What kind of a chump are you?"

"No chump at all, Bert. But I believe honesty is the best policy. We have no right to keep that money if it turns out that we learn who it really belongs to."

"If we know who lost it I suppose we ought to give it up. But to go around wasting a lot of good time trying to find a needle in a haystack, when that money means so much to us, why, I don't believe in it at all," retorted Bert, doggedly.

"I don't mean to lose any time over it, because my time largely belongs to Mr. Fisher, who pays me a salary for eight hours' work a day. What I mean is we ought to make inquiries throughout the State, without stating that we had the money, in order to find out if anybody lost such a sum. If within a reasonable time we don't discover any clue to its rightful owner, then I am willing to admit that we can honestly retain it."

"Well, I believe that findings is keepings. And I'm willing to bet there isn't one man in a thousand who would, under the circumstances, worry himself about who had lost the coin."

"Your views are not exactly my views, Bert, so we won't argue the question any longer. If you've eaten all you're going to, why just do your share of the kitchen work—that is, wash the dishes, while I put the stove on board, and get things in shape for starting down the river."

Bert had no objection to this division of labor, and in fifteen minutes had the dishes dry and clean on board the catboat again.

Ten minutes later they sailed out of Swan Creek in the moonlight, and set their course down the crooked river for Brentwood.

CHAPTER IX.

BERT MEETS WITH A TERRIBLE LOSS.

The catboat with Fred and Bert on board arrived at her moorings at about eleven o'clock that night.

Mr. Barclay, her owner, wasn't to be seen around, as he had gone to bed a good two hours before, so Fred tied her securely to the wharf and left her.

The boys, each with his bag of gold coin, and a part of the surveying instruments under his other arm, set out for their homes.

Fred put his bag of gold in what he considered a safe place for the night, and on the following morning, on his way to the office, he stopped at the home of the head constable of the town, and told him the story of the two dead men in the woods near Clear Lake.

The police official promised to attend to the case, and Fred was satisfied.

The young surveyor made his report to Mr. Fisher as soon as that gentleman appeared at the office.

"You have done very well, Fred; very well indeed. In fact, I felt confident that you would acquit yourself in a thoroughly satisfactory manner. Commencing with this week, I shall add a couple of dollars more to your salary, as an evidence of my appreciation of the growing value of your services."

"Thank you, sir."

"You well deserve the increase, and I am glad to give it to you. We are to do the survey of the new trolley extension to Taylorville this fall, and I shall probably intrust the larger part of the work to you."

"I shall do my best to satisfy you, Mr. Fisher."

"You needn't tell me that. I know that whatever passes through your hands will be done well."

Fred returned to his routine work, and Mr. Fisher went out shortly afterward.

"Did you hear the news, Fred?" asked Bert, as soon as the boss had closed the office door behind him.

"What news?"

"The Jenkins' house was burglarized last night."

"Is that really a fact?" asked Fred, with some interest.

"Sure thing."

"How came you to hear about it? I was at Constable Brown's this morning, and he never said a word about it."

"I heard it up at the post-office. I guess everybody in town knows about it by this time."

"I guess so. News of that nature flies about fast in this town. Did they lose much?"

"I believe a great many things of value were taken away. Luke lost his gold watch and a five-dollar bill. The old man lost his watch and a wallet full of bills. I believe some of Mrs. Jenkins' jewelry was taken, and a lot of sterling silver articles were also pinched. Jenkins, they say, has sent to Creston for a detective."

Fred passed Luke Jenkins on the street that afternoon, and that young aristocrat didn't appear to be in an amiable frame of mind.

He favored the young surveyor with a scowl.

Luke was down on Fred more than ever since the brave boy pulled Dora Darling out of the rapids of Snake River.

While it is true that Luke was delighted to learn that the girl had escaped from drowning, he regarded it as a personal affront that she owed her life to the boy he disliked so much.

As soon as he learned that Dora was all right, he had called upon her to offer his congratulations, and to excuse his own conduct on that occasion.

The servant carried his name upstairs, and then brought him word that the girl was not at home.

Luke was as mad as a hornet, for he had reason to know that Dora was at home.

He called on the following day, and got the same message.

He went off in a huff, and when he saw her on the street that same afternoon, he wouldn't notice her, which just suited Dora, as she was determined to have nothing further to do with him.

Luke's animosity toward him didn't worry Fred for a cent.

The two had never been friends at any time, and it didn't seem likely there would ever be any change in their present relationship.

Before the local bank closed for the day Fred took a japanned box to Mr. Darling, and asked him to keep it for him in the bank vault.

The \$6,000 in gold coin which had been in the bag was in

it, and the boy was resolved not to touch a penny of it until he was satisfied he might do so with justice to himself.

Fred would have liked to have persuaded Bert to make a similar disposition of his share of the gold, but his office associate wouldn't listen to the suggestion even for a moment.

He clung to his original argument that findings is keepings, at least in that case, and he stowed the bag of money at the bottom of his trunk in his room, where he could look at and handle the eagles and double eagles whenever he was disposed.

He had counted it, and found he had something over \$5,000.

The night following the robbery at the Jenkins' mansion he counted it over once more with immense satisfaction.

Next morning he found his window open from the bottom, and was rather surprised at the circumstance.

After breakfast he had occasion to go to his trunk for something, and found its contents all topsy-turvy.

With his heart in his throat he looked down in the corner where he had stowed the bag of money.

The bag with its precious contents was missing.

He threw everything out of his trunk in his frantic search for his treasure, but there was not a sign of it anywhere.

Bert was so disheartened over his loss that he scarcely had the courage to go to the office.

He arrived half an hour late, and his face showed that something had gone wrong with him.

"What's the matter, Bert?" asked Fred, wondering what ailed him.

"Nothing," replied the other, shortly.

"Nothing, eh? Why, you look as if you'd lost your best friend."

"I've lost something as good as that."

"What did you lose?"

"I've lost that bag of money I brought from the hills."

"You have!" whistled Fred.

"I have, honor bright."

"Why, how came you to lose it?"

"Somebody entered my room last night, and went through my trunk. That's where I kept it, and this morning it wasn't there."

"Well, upon my word, that's hard luck. You haven't any suspicion as to the identity of the thief?"

Bert, who felt like crying over his loss, shook his head dejectedly.

"Tell me all the particulars," said Fred.

There wasn't much to tell, and Bert soon told all he knew.

"Some person must have seen you through the window counting that money."

"My room is on the second floor, so I don't see how anybody could have seen me."

They talked the matter over for a while, and then the subject was dropped.

That night the Darling house was entered and plundered of silverware, jewelry, and pieces of valuable bric-a-brac.

CHAPTER X.

THE NAPHTHA LAUNCH THAT VISITED BRENTWOOD.

Two bold burglaries committed within three days threw the good people of Brentwood into a fever of consternation.

Until the Jenkins' home was entered and robbed such a crime hadn't been known in the town for years.

The detective who came from Creston to aid the Brentwood constabulary declared that both jobs had been done by a professional crook, possibly two, of more than ordinary ability.

The residents could talk of nothing else—morning, noon, and night—but the robberies.

Therefore when, on the succeeding night, the house of Mr. Starbuck, the wealthy president of the wagon works, was cleaned out of money, jewelry, and various small articles of considerable value, the feeling in town developed into a kind of panic, and the people began to ask one another who would be the next victim.

Abner Jenkins announced a reward of \$1,000 for the apprehension and conviction of the criminal or criminals.

Mr. Starbuck also posted a reward of the same amount, while Mr. Darling and the town council each added \$500.

A second detective was called in, and the entire police department of Brentwood became active in the hope of earning the money and adding to their reputation as sleuths.

A bright watch was kept in the neighborhood of the homes of the well-to-do residents, where another attempt was looked for, but it didn't come.

The crook or crooks, either satisfied for the present with the results obtained, or rendered wary by the vigilance of the officers of the law, made no further effort to enrich themselves at the expense of the Brentwood people.

The detectives followed up several clews that came their way, but in the end they amounted to nothing.

During all this time a dainty-looking naphtha launch, which had come up the river two days before the first burglary, passing the rapids through the tortuous channel which alone permitted a safe passage of that dangerous stretch of navigation, lay off Barclay's wharf.

A gentleman, with a profusion of glossy black whiskers, who said his name was Redgrave, and announced himself as the owner of the pretty boat, was much in evidence around town, looking at available sites for the erection of a bolt and nut works, which he said a New York company was proposing to erect either at Creston or Brentwood.

His presence excited considerable interest among those who learned about his errand, as he hinted that in case the works were established at Brentwood the P. Y. & D. railroad, which passed through Creston, would build a branch to the former place, a proposition the company was known to have been considering for more than a year past, and had even gone so far as to have the proposed right of way surveyed.

This gentleman was accompanied by a bright-eyed, smoothly shaven man, whom he introduced as Mr. Jax, who was to be manager of the proposed works.

When they were not looking at vacant plots of ground they were wandering around the residence section of town where the better class houses were situated, apparently admiring the architectural beauties of the different residences.

As the smooth-faced man intimated that he intended to build a handsome home in Brentwood if the works were located there, he was courteously received, and allowed to inspect the home of many of those who thought he might one day become a neighbor of theirs.

The gentlemen when on shore left the launch in charge of a stout, florid complexioned individual, who was presumed to be the navigator and general factotum on the boat.

About eleven o'clock on the morning following the last burglary the launch left her anchorage and headed down the river.

One of the Creston detectives was on the wharf talking to Barclay at the time, but her departure didn't seem to give him any concern.

Evidently Messrs. Redgrave and Jax were above suspicion.

Two hours later Fred Stuart, accompanied by Dora Darling, came down to the same wharf, embarked on Mr. Barclay's catboat, and also started down the river.

Fred was going to Creston on business for Mr. Fisher, and for reasons of his own he chose to go by water instead of taking the convenient trolley.

He had invited Dora to make the trip with him.

Clearly both Dora and her mother placed a world of confidence in the young surveyor when neither raised the slightest opposition to his proposal, though both knew the boat would have to essay the crooked channel in the rapids in making the journey.

"Isn't it a delightful afternoon?" said Dora, enthusiastically.

"It is, indeed," replied Fred. "You don't seem to be a bit nervous, though the last time you were out on the river you nearly lost your life."

"Why should I be?" she asked with a smile. "Aren't you with me?"

Fred flushed with pleasure at her words.

"I am glad both you and your mother feel so confident of my ability to take care of you," he said with a smile. "I was almost afraid she would object to you going when I told her where I was bound."

"We both felt that you would not have invited me if you thought I would be exposed to any real danger."

"That's right, Dora. I know the channel through the rapids like a book, for I have been through there more than a dozen times. A cool head, a steady hand, and perfect knowledge of the navigation of the channel is all that is necessary to carry a boat safely through. Still, even so, I wouldn't take you along only that the day is a perfect one for the trip."

"Yes, Fred, I know you will take the best of care of me; so does mother. In fact, I have such confidence in you that I would even face a little risk under your protection."

"You make me feel very happy to hear you say that. You

have had some evidence what I am willing to go through for your sake. I promise you that I shall always be ready to stand by you under any circumstances. More than that I couldn't say."

"You're the best boy in the world, Fred Stuart," said Dora, placing her hand confidently on his arm, while a humid look came into her pretty eyes.

"Thanks," he laughed. "Let us talk about something else."

And they did, until the bend in the river brought them close upon the rapids, and a somewhat startling sight arrested their attention.

It was the naphtha launch wedged in between a couple of the black rocks which dotted the rapids.

Redgrave, Jax and the florid-complexioned man were standing in the stern in an animated consultation.

Apparently the boat's navigator had made some mistake in his reckoning, and thereby run the launch into a serious dilemma.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Dora. "That pretty boat is aground."

"You mean she's on the rocks, and in a bad place, too," replied Fred, regarding the stranded launch with great interest.

"Do you think they will be able to save her?"

"If she hasn't stove in her bows I daresay it will be possible to haul her off and save her. I would not insure her for much as she now stands."

"Isn't it a shame!"

"Yes, it's too bad, for she's a fine-looking boat. I'd like to own such a craft myself. Then I could take you sailing on calm nights in the summer, when the moon shines on the river, and the wind has gone to sleep."

"Wouldn't that be just too delightful!" she cried, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

"I should say so."

At that moment the occupants of the launch caught sight of the catboat, and Mr. Jax immediately began to signal Fred.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NAPHTHA LAUNCH FAILS TO YIELD TO THE GOOD OFFICES OF THE CATBOAT.

"It's rather a ticklish job to run alongside of that craft as she lies," said Fred in a doubtful tone to Dora. "I wouldn't mind if you were not with me, but your safety is of the first importance to me."

"Oh, don't mind me," she hastened to say. "I am ready to go wherever you are willing to go."

"You forget that I am also answerable to your mother for you, Dora. I can't afford to take any chances."

"But it wouldn't be fair to leave those men in that dangerous situation. The least we can do is to take them off."

"Well, that's true. If the launch should happen to break up and go to the bottom they would stand a good chance of being drowned."

"If you think so, I should never forgive myself if I prevented you from saving them."

"Then you are willing I should take the risk?" he said, regarding her admiringly.

"Under the circumstances—yes."

Fred threw the catboat into the wind, and as the stream bore her down to the stranded launch he manipulated his craft so as to fetch her up under the other boat's stern.

"Dora," said Fred, "I can't leave the tiller. Do you think you've nerve enough to get on the cabin, go forward, and cast that coil of rope at the foot of the mast to those people as I bring this boat alongside of the launch?"

"Yes, Fred," replied Dora, without a trace of indecision.

She stepped on the weather seat of the cockpit, thence to the roof of the cabin, and taking the coil of rope in her hand, stood waiting for the right moment to cast it.

"Let it go, Dora," exclaimed Fred, presently.

The girl tossed the coil, and Mr. Jax caught it as it fluttered toward the launch.

Then she grasped the mast for support, and stood where she was while the catboat came alongside the other craft.

"Thanks, young lady," said Mr. Redgrave, raising his hat politely to Dora, and bestowing a glance of admiration upon her pretty face and figure.

Dora smiled as any other girl would probably have done under the circumstances.

"That's a stanch craft you've got there, young man," said Mr. Jax, addressing Fred.

"She's all right," replied the boy. "How came you to run on those rocks? I should think if you had managed to steer your boat through on your upward trip it would have been plain sailing for you to return by the same channel."

"So it would, only our rudder chain got jammed at a critical moment, and we couldn't control our course."

"Oh, that was it?"

"Yes, that was it," replied Mr. Jax, nodding his head vigorously, as if to show that there wasn't the least doubt about the matter.

The excuse he gave was a reasonable one, and Fred believed him.

"The launch seems to be well jammed in between those rocks," remarked the boy. "How do you expect to get out of your difficulty?"

"We were thinking you might be able to pull us off," replied Mr. Jax.

"I hardly think I can, but I'm willing to try if you are sure you haven't sprung your bows badly."

"What do you think, Yates?" asked Mr. Jax, turning to the florid-complexioned man.

"I'll take another look for'ard," the man replied, and suiting the action to the word, he started for the bows of the launch to investigate.

"It's lucky for us you turned up," put in Mr. Redgrave, stroking his glossy beard, and casting another admiring glance in Dora's direction. "We were half afraid we might go to the bottom any moment. It's a nasty spot, these rapids. They spoil your river."

"They don't improve it, that's a fact," laughed Fred.

"We may have to ask you to take us down to Creston," went on the bewhiskered man, with his eye on the girl.

"I guess we can do that," answered Fred, politely. "This boat will easily carry half a dozen passengers."

"We shall, of course, pay you for your trouble," said Mr. Redgrave, with a smile that displayed an even row of very white and regular teeth.

"I shouldn't accept a cent for any service I might be able to render you," replied Fred, decidedly.

At this juncture the stout man returned from his inspection.

"She doesn't seem to be injured in the least," he said.

"However, I'll glance into the run and see if she has sprung a leak anywhere."

He disappeared into the cabin.

"You have a handsome boat," said Fred. "It's a pity you met with this accident."

"Jax and I bought her at a bargain," said Mr. Redgrave. "She's an A1 launch, fitted up in fine shape, and is worth quite a pretty figure. We expect to go way up the river in her in a few days; that is, if we don't lose her here. Her loss would be a serious matter to us."

"You are the gentlemen who have been looking at building sites in Brentwood, I believe, with the view of setting up a factory there," said Fred, who had heard all about their presumed errand to the town.

The two men exchanged glances, and an almost imperceptible grin came over their features for a moment.

"Yes," replied Mr. Redgrave, "we have been looking at several eligible building sites."

"It is not for us to decide that question, though our views will naturally greatly affect the ultimate result. We will make our report to the company, and then—" looking at Mr. Jax.

"Exactly," coincided his companion. "We will make our report to the company, and the company will finally pass on the matter."

"Well, I hope your company will decide to build their factory in our town. It would be of great benefit to us if the railroad came to Brentwood."

"I have no doubt it would," replied Mr. Redgrave, with a peculiar smile, while Mr. Jax turned his head away to hide a grin that he couldn't repress, but which he didn't want the boy to see.

Yates now came out of the cabin, and announced that there was no water in the hold.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Mr. Jax. "Now, young man, what did you say your name was?"

"Fred Stuart."

"And the young lady's name?" asked Mr. Redgrave, throwing another of his admiring glances in her direction.

"Never mind the young lady's name," interrupted Mr. Jax, sharply. "If you will allow us to attach a rope around that cleat on your stern rail, Mr. Stuart, we will be glad to have you try and pull us out of this fix."

"You may do so, Mr.—"

"Jax," replied that gentleman.

"Thank you. Hand me the rope, sir, and I will make it fast."

"Yates," ordered Mr. Jax, in a tone which seemed to indicate that he was the real mogul of the party, "make one end of that rope yonder fast to this cleat here, and then pass the other end to the young man."

Yates obeyed this order with alacrity.

After Fred had made his end fast to the cleat on the catboat, he went forward and told Dora to return to the cockpit.

Then he pulled in and recoiled the painter which the girl had thrown to Mr. Jax.

All was now ready for the attempt to draw the naphtha launch out of her dangerous situation.

Fred put the helm up, the boat swung around into the wind, her sail bellied out, and she tried to dart off up the river.

The stout rope which held the two boats together became taut in a moment, and creaked and complained as if it would come asunder.

It held, however, and the launch made a movement as if she were about to leave her undesirable quarters; but nevertheless she didn't.

The catboat strained and quivered from end to end, but her good offices were all in vain.

The launch stuck as fast to the rocks as a porous plaster to the human skin.

Evidently she had budged all she was going to do; or, rather, the rocks objected to parting with so charming a bit of man's handiwork, so the attempt to float her free had to be reluctantly abandoned.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO FRED STUART IN THE CABIN OF THE LAUNCH.

"It's no go," said Fred, at last, throwing the catboat into the wind so that her sail shivered and she floated back again to her former position alongside the launch.

Messrs. Jax and Redgrave were clearly much disappointed with the unsatisfactory result, and they went forward and held a consultation in tones which did not reach the ears of those aboard the catboat.

Having reached some conclusion, they returned to the stern, and Mr. Jax said:

"Young man, we shall have to ask you to take us off."

"Then you have decided to abandon the launch?" asked Fred.

"We can't help ourselves."

"Probably you can get a tug at Creston to come up here and drag her off. As long as your boat is not injured to any extent it will pay you."

"We will consider your suggestion," replied Mr. Jax. "In the meantime—"

"You want me to take you and your associates down the river?"

"Exactly."

"Very well. Step aboard."

"We have some valuable stuff that we must also transfer," said Mr. Jax.

"If we can carry it I have no objection."

"Step aboard here and I will show it to you," said the mogul, glibly.

"I don't like to leave this boat, lest by some mishap it might—"

"She won't run away. If the young lady is afraid to remain alone Redgrave here will keep her company."

"Certainly," said the man with the glossy beard, jumping into the cockpit of the catboat without waiting for an invitation from Fred.

"It isn't necessary for me to see what you want to transship, I guess," replied the boy, looking at Mr. Jax. "You can bring the stuff aboard."

"I would prefer that you saw it," said the mogul of the launch, in a tone which intimated that he wouldn't take no for an answer.

Fred was disposed to hold back, but finally concluded that there wasn't much danger of his boat getting adrift.

He was also a bit curious to see the interior arrangements of the handsome little launch, which he judged must be in keeping with her exterior, so he stepped on board of her.

Mr. Jax led the way to the cabin, into which Yates had previously disappeared in obedience to some private signal from him.

Fred was duly impressed by the elegant surroundings he found below.

The cabin had been fitted up regardless of cost.

There was every imaginable convenience there, including four berths, two on either side, which were built to shut up on the principle of sleeping-car berths.

The interior decorations were in white and gold, and there was lots of what is called gingerbread work.

In fact, the cabin would of itself have made a boudoir suitable for a lady of wealth and taste.

"Sit down, Stuart," said Mr. Jax, familiarly, pushing the boy toward a luxurious lounge, "and have a drink with me."

"I never drink, thank you," replied Fred, as the man reached for a cut glass decanter, containing an amber-colored liquor, which stood in a swinging rack under the skylight.

"Don't drink!" exclaimed the mogul of the boat, looking hard at him.

"No, sir. I have never drank a drop of liquor in my life, and I don't mean to. I don't approve of the practice, especially in boys."

"Oh, indeed," answered Mr. Jax, with a sneer. "Do you smoke?" he asked, as he helped himself to a glassful of the liquor. "I've got a box of fine Havanas here which reach the spot every time."

"I do not smoke either," replied Fred, firmly.

"Oh, you don't. Quite a model young man, aren't you," he said, with a disagreeable grin.

Fred made no reply, though his looks plainly showed that he resented this kind of conduct on the man's part.

While they were talking, Yates was busily engaged in lifting bundles and packages from the run or hold of the launch through a trap or opening in the floor of the cabin which had been concealed under a heavy Ottoman rug.

Fred wondered at the quantity and variety of these packages, which made a big pile on the floor.

"Put that stuff into the cabin of the catboat," ordered Mr. Jax.

"You seem to have quite a cargo on board," said Fred.

"Yes. These are samples of work manufactured by the company," replied the mogul of the launch, glibly.

As he spoke, Yates, who had picked up as many of the bundles as he could carry, accidentally dropped one.

The fastenings came apart as it struck the floor, and an elegant silver water pitcher, with the name "Darling" engraved upon it, lay exposed; on its cover flying open, a shower of silver spoons of different sizes flew over the rug.

Mr. Jax uttered an oath, and began hastily to recover the scattered spoons and return them to the pitcher.

As for Fred, he was fairly thunderstruck.

He recognized the pitcher as one of the treasures of the Darling home which had been stolen a couple of nights before with a lot of other valuable property.

Being a quick-witted boy, this discovery took his breath away, and a terrible suspicion of the true character of these men took possession of his mind.

Mr. Jax cast a glance at the boy as he was rewrapping the pitcher, and from the expression of Fred's face he deemed some explanation to be in order.

"When I said these were all samples of our work I forgot that Redgrave has a quantity of his household silver on board," he said, with a curious laugh. "This is some of it."

That settled the matter for Fred, since he knew the man was deliberately lying.

He rose to his feet with a flush of indignation on his face.

"Do you mean to tell me that that silver pitcher belongs to Mr. Redgrave?" he said, facing Mr. Jax.

"Certainly it does," replied the man, as he tied the last knot.

"How, then, is it that it is marked with the name 'Darling'?"

"Eh!" exclaimed Mr. Jax, with a menacing look in his eyes.

"I say it is engraved with the word 'Darling,'" replied the boy, stoutly. "That is one of the pieces of silverware stolen the other night from the Darling residence in Brentwood."

Mr. Jax sprang to his feet and shook his fist in Fred's face.

"Take care, young man, you are going too far."

"I know what I am talking about. How came it to be in your possession?"

The man's answer was a quick blow which stretched the boy out on the floor.

Before Fred could recover Mr. Jax was upon him like a tiger, and had a revolver pressed against his temple.

"You appear to know too much for your own good," he said, in a tense tone. "I see it is necessary to teach you a lesson."

At that moment Yates returned to the cabin.

"Get me a piece of rope, Bill," said the mogul of the launch. "This young fellow appears too dangerous to our interests to be allowed too much scope of action."

The rope was produced by Yates, and Mr. Jax bound Fred's arms tightly behind his back, and then secured him to one of the legs of the table.

"There, young man, I think you won't give us any further trouble," said Mr. Jax, grimly, as he rose to his feet. "You will stay there till the launch goes to pieces, or some one comes from the shore to take a look at the boat, which won't be soon, in my opinion."

"So you and your companions are the mysterious thieves who have been robbing the people of our town? The law will soon put you where you belong."

"We're not worrying about the law," retorted Mr. Jax. "Before you get the chance to squeal, if you ever do, we'll be beyond the boundaries of this State. We've hoodwinked smarter sleuths than any you can muster in this locality. Hurry the rest of the stuff on board the catboat, Yates."

Mr. Jax took a hand himself at the work, and before many minutes had passed all of the stolen property, which amounted to a considerable pile, had been transferred to the sailboat.

The decanter of liquor and a number of other articles belonging to the launch, including the valuable rugs, were also taken away.

"You'll pay dearly for this outrage," said Fred, as Mr. Jax paused in front of him to say a final word.

"Bah!" replied the man, contemptuously.

"What do you mean to do with Miss Darling?" asked Fred, anxiously.

"So her name is Darling, eh?"

"Yes."

"She is a member of the family that you say was robbed, is she? Very well. We'll look out for her. Don't worry about her."

The crook favored Fred with a significant smile.

"If any harm comes to her," cried the boy, vehemently, "I'll never rest till I bring you to justice."

"Talk is cheap," sneered Mr. Jax. "You'll be lucky if you come out of this alive."

He examined the fastenings which held the boy, and being satisfied with the inspection, he made Fred an ironical bow and left the cabin, and a moment later the launch.

"Great Scott! What will be the end of this? And what will happen to Dora?" groaned the boy, struggling in vain to release himself.

A half-suppressed scream came to his ears from without.

"My heaven! That was Dora's voice. What are they doing to her?"

He writhed and squirmed desperately at his bonds, but there was no getting loose from them.

He was simply frantic over the unfortunate situation of the girl.

But he could do nothing, and from certain sounds which presently ceased, he knew the sailboat was leaving the stranded launch and heading down the river.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW BERT BARLOW TURNED UP ON THE LAUNCH.

The reader can easier imagine than we can describe the feeling of Fred Stuart as he lay helpless in the cabin of the stranded launch and realized that he had been abandoned in a desperate situation.

He knew only too well that the chance of an immediate rescue from the shore was slight.

The banks of the river at this point were lonely and deserted.

There was a creek, the one over which Mr. Fisher had built a bridge, lately completed, on the Brentwood side, and a narrow inlet on the other.

But these little waterways were seldom navigated.

There was a marsh below the inlet, where people went shooting in the fall and winter, but no one ever strolled there at this season of the year.

The boy's only chance was that a boat from up or down the river might come along and their occupants board the stranded launch out of curiosity.

His chief concern was for Dora Darling.

He hoped the rascals would put her ashore at Creston, whence she would be able to reach home by the trolley.

But he was more than half afraid they would not.

"I fear they will carry her some distance down the river till they think it safe to put her ashore and let her shift for herself. Those chaps won't take any chances by giving her an opportunity to set the officers on their trail. What a slick trio of rascals they are! To rob three of our best homes in Brentwood, carry their plunder aboard of this launch, and then walk around town afterward under the very noses of the constables and detectives. That shows their nerve and skill, and proves that they are old and experienced hands at the business. They will not be easily caught. I'd give everything I own in the world if I hadn't invited Dora to come with me on this trip. Her parents will never forgive me, and I am sure I'll never forgive myself if anything happens to her. It was dreadfully unfortunate."

Half an hour passed away, during which Fred made many unavailing attempts to release himself, yet he was not disposed to give up to despair as long as an ounce of strength remained in his arms.

While he was resting from a prolonged effort to slip one hand from the cord which held it to the table, he felt something bump against the stern of the launch.

"Help! Help! Hilloa!" he shouted as loud as he could.

His back was to the cabin door, which Mr. Jax had closed as a precautionary measure.

He waited a moment or two, and then repeated the cry.

He was sure now that somebody was walking about outside looking the boat over.

"Surely he'll come into the cabin before he thinks of leaving the launch," thought Fred.

He was quite right in thinking so.

Anybody boarding a stranded boat in the situation of the launch would certainly take a peep into the cabin after satisfying his curiosity outside.

That is just what the visitor in this instance did.

He put his hand on the knob of the cabin door and opened it.

Apparently the place was deserted, for Fred was out of sight behind the table cover.

But the prisoner heard the door open, and he called out again.

"Help! Please come here and release me."

The visitor was startled and hung back.

He didn't know what to make out of it.

He couldn't see the owner of the voice anywhere.

"Are you going to help me out of this?" asked Fred, impatiently.

"Who are you, and where are you?" inquired a voice, which the young surveyor instantly recognized, and with some astonishment, as belonging to Bert Barlow.

"Is that you, Bert?" he said, eagerly.

"Why, Fred, where are you?" returned the amazed Bert, now reassured, stepping into the cabin.

"Tied to one of the legs of the table."

"Why, how came you to be aboard of this craft?" asked Bert, coming forward to the spot where his friend and associate sat bunched up on the floor. "My gracious! what has happened to you?"

"Cut me loose and I'll tell you all about it, old chap. But how happens it that you're here and not at the office?"

"The boss let me off for the half day, as there was a consultation seance at the office, and it wasn't large enough to hold us all conveniently."

"That was it, eh?" replied Fred, as Bert began sawing away at the cords which secured his arms. "What brought you down the river this far?"

"I rowed down in one of Barclay's boats, intending to fish up the creek. I saw this launch high and dry almost on the rocks, and came out to look it over."

"Mighty lucky thing for me that you turned up in this neighborhood," said Fred, shaking himself free and standing up. "But I'm in a terrible scrape."

"You mean you were before I cut you loose," grinned Bert.

"No, I don't. I'm free, thank goodness, but I'm not out of the scrape by any means."

"You'll be out of it as soon as I take you to the shore."

"No, I won't."

"Why not?" in some surprise.

"Just listen, and I'll tell you what the trouble is. You know Mr. Fisher sent me on business to Creston?"

"Sure. That's why I'm astonished to find you here on the river. I supposed you'd taken the trolley down."

"No. I came this far in Barclay's catboat."

"The dickens you did! Where is the catboat?"

"Three scoundrels have gone off in her."

"Three scoundrels!"

"Yes. The crooks the police are looking for."

"Do you mean those burglars?"

"I do. They came to Brentwood in this launch."

"You don't mean it!" incredulously.

"I do mean it. And you'll never guess who they are."

"How could I?"

"Two of them are the persons who have been in town for a week past pretending to look for a building site for a bogus New York company that expected to build a bolt and nut works either at Creston or Brentwood."

"You're joking, ain't you?"

"Not on your life! Their names are Jax and Redgrave."

"I've seen 'em. One had a big black beard, while the other was smooth shaven."

"Those are the chaps. They left town some time this morning, and ran their boat on the rocks, just as you see her. I left Barclay's wharf at one o'clock with Dora Darling."

"With who?"

"Dora Darling. She was going to Creston with me for the sail."

"Where is she now, then?" asked Bert, looking around as if he expected to see the girl somewhere about.

"She's in the hands of those villains. They carried her off."

"Good gracious!"

"We found them here, and tried to help them out of their scrape. We did not suspect that they were the burglars. The fellow Jax induced me to come aboard the launch to see some stuff he wanted to transfer to the sailboat after I had agreed to take them down to Creston. I wouldn't have dreamed of their real identity even then if it hadn't been that one of the packages came apart, and I recognized some of the Darling stolen property. Then Jax, seeing that the cat was out of the bag, knocked me down and tied me up as you found me. After he had done so he and his associates put off in the catboat, on board of which Dora had remained all the time."

"And they have actually carried her off?"

"They have?"

"Where to?"

"Heaven only knows. That's what worries me."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"We must go ashore right away and telegraph down the river."

"If you could get this launch off the rocks we could give them a lively chase, and catch 'em, too, for this boat will go three feet to the catboat's one."

"But she won't come off."

"How do you know she won't?"

"Because I tried to pull her off with the sailboat."

"You did?"

"I did, and it wouldn't work."

"That's too bad," said Bert. "Let's get out on deck and see if we can't do something to get her afloat. She doesn't seem to be hurt at all."

"She isn't hurt. Hasn't even sprung a leak the least bit."

"Then it's worth an effort to try and get her clear."

"I don't see how we're going to do it."

"Could you run the engine if we got afloat?"

"Yes. I've practiced on that small launch of Barclay's."

The boys went up on deck.

Fred thought the matter over a moment, then he said:

"Come forward with me."

He looked over the bows and thought the launch was not so badly wedged in as she had appeared to be at first.

"I wonder if I couldn't pry her off. She's light, and ought to move easily if the right purchase is brought to bear. There's standing room on these rocks, so I'm going to see what I can do."

Fred had noticed a long bar of steel in the cabin, and that had put the idea into his head of trying to use it on the launch.

He went down and got it, then he took off his shoes and stockings, and rolled his trousers up above his knees.

"Now, Bert, hand me the end of that rope."

He tied it securely under his armpits.

"You hold on to this and steady me, so the tide doesn't carry me off my feet."

"All right," replied Bert.

Fred, grasping the bar with one hand, stepped down on the rocks.

Then he dug it into the rock and tried to work the launch backward.

She didn't seem inclined to budge.

In the midst of his operations a big piece of rock broke off.

Fred persevered and another piece went.

This exposed a couple of feet of the boat's bow on that side, and then Fred saw that the force of the stream was making the launch swerve around at the stern.

That showed he had weakened the grip of the rocks.

He jumped on board, started the engine, and reversed the movement of the propellers.

To his great satisfaction in about two minutes the launch floated clear.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE CATBOAT.

"Hurrah!" yelled Bert, gleefully. "We're afloat."

Fred backed the launch into clear water, then started her ahead and pointed her nose into the channel, down which she went kiting at an exhilarating rate.

"How much headway have those men got on us?" asked Bert.

"Something less than an hour, I should think," replied Fred.

"Then we ought to overtake them in another hour, don't you think?"

"If they keep to the river. They may put in at Creston, let Dora go and take a train either east or west."

"Then we'll have to look for Barclay's boat at the wharves before we go further down the river."

"It's my opinion, however, that they won't land at Creston, on account of the amount of plunder, which is considerable, they have aboard. The chances are they intend to strike one of the smaller towns further on through which the railroad passes, crate the stuff, and ship it to some place at a distance, where they will go themselves and dispose of the articles at their leisure."

"If they keep on beyond Creston we'll overtake them."

"And suppose we do, what then?"

"What then?" in surprise.

"Exactly. Those fellows are armed. At least, Jax has a revolver, I know, for he drew it on me. There are three of them, and only two of us. How are we going to capture them, and get Dora back?"

Bert scratched his head in perplexity.

"The fact of the matter is we'll have to stop at Creston, go to the police station, and tell our story. That'll take time. Maybe an hour. By the time we start again with a couple of officers on board the rascals will be miles ahead."

As soon as they had passed the rapids Fred asked Bert to look after the engine, while he went into the cabin.

His object was to see if they couldn't find something that would serve them for effective weapons against the burglars.

He didn't want to stop at Creston longer than was necessary to make sure whether or not the crooks had landed there if he could avoid it.

Fred hardly expected that the crooks had left anything of any worth behind them in the launch.

They rummaged the lockers, and found canned meats, vegetables and fruits, together with two loaves of bread, and everything necessary to furnish meals for three for several days.

"I wonder where they got hold of this launch?" he asked himself. "Of course, they must have stolen her somewhere. She was evidently the property of a wealthy man, for any one can see that she cost a lot of money."

Fred soon satisfied himself that the crooks hadn't left anything in the shape of a weapon behind them.

"I don't see but that I'll have to put in at Creston and enlist the services of the police. It would be rank foolishness to think of overhauling those rascals without having the ability to overcome them."

As he was about to return on deck he noticed a long, thin, polished mahogany case running up one side of the cabin door.

It seemed to have been put there to match the barometer case on the opposite side.

The cover worked on three hinges, and was held by a brass clasp and button.

Curious to see what was inside, Fred opened it.

He was astonished and delighted to find a splendid magazine rifle.

He took it out of the case, examined it, and saw that it was loaded with ten cartridges.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "I think this will just fill the bill. This ought to be enough to bring those rascals to their knees. Well, I'm going to chance it, anyhow, if we overtake them on the river."

He returned the rifle to its case until wanted, and then rejoined Bert on deck.

Creston was now in full view on the right-hand bank of the river, less than a mile away.

The launch was steered close in to the wharves, and her speed reduced to a slow pace.

"Keep your eyes well skinned for Barclay's boat," said Fred.

The wharves were closely inspected as they passed by, but there was no sign of the catboat Katydid.

"They've gone on down the river," said Bert, as they passed by the lowest wharf. "What are you going to do?"

"Follow them," replied Fred, tersely, as he headed the launch out into the center of the stream again and increased her speed.

"Then you've given up the idea of calling in the police to help you?"

"I have. We've got to fight it out ourselves."

"But you said a short time ago that it would be rank foolishness to—"

"Tackle them without arms, eh?"

"That's right."

"Well, I discovered a loaded magazine rifle in the cabin, and I'm willing to take chances with that."

"You did? Sure it's loaded?"

"There are ten cartridges in it all ready for business, and so am I," returned Fred, in a determined tone.

They had the river to themselves, and they skimmed along at a lively pace which promised soon to overhaul the sailboat.

The crooked course of the river prevented them from seeing very far ahead at any point, therefore they looked to come suddenly on their quarry.

Fred brought the rifle on deck, and showed it to his companion.

"It's a beauty," remarked Bert, in a tone of admiration, as he looked it over.

"It certainly is a fine gun, and an effective one, too."

"If they won't give in when you order them to do so you mean to shoot them?"

"I shall certainly shoot, though I don't mean to kill any one of them if I can avoid such a thing. But they've got to give up Dora, to begin with, and their plunder, too, and the sailboat also. If we can take them prisoners it'll be a feather in our caps."

They talked their plan of operations over until Bert suddenly said:

"By the great korn! There's the boat now, right ahead."

Fred looked down the river, and recognized Barclay's sailboat gliding along close inshore at a lively clip.

The three men were seated in the cockpit, but there was no sign of Dora.

"They've got her out of sight in the cabin," said Fred.

"They are on to us now. The fellows are looking this way."

The crooks could not help but recognize the approaching launch, and this discovery seemed to produce some excitement among them.

Evidently things were on the eve of a crisis.

CHAPTER XV.

FRED AND BERT COME OUT ON TOP.

The launch was headed for the sailboat, and the two boys soon saw that the burglars were prepared to make things lively for them.

"Keep off or I'll shoot!" roared Jax, flourishing his revolver in a belligerent way.

"The chap with the whiskers has a shooter, too," said Bert, who was getting nervous over the prospect of a bullet coming his way.

"I see he has," answered Fred, coolly.

"What are you going to do?"

"My first move is to try and persuade them to give Dora up."

"And suppose they won't?"

"Then there'll be something doing, that's all," said Fred, grimly.

"Are you going to keep away or not?" demanded Jax.

"I want you to put the young lady ashore," replied Fred.

"Put nothing ashore. We'll let her go when we get good and ready. If you don't sheer off at once I'll shoot you. This is the last warning I'm going to give you, and when I shoot I'll shoot to hit you, d'ye understand?"

Jax evidently meant business from the tone of his voice and his actions.

"You'd better give the young lady up if you know when you're well off," answered Fred, altering the launch's course to one parallel with the sailboat.

Jax laughed insolently.

"Have you got any cops in the cabin, young man, that you carry such a high tone?" he asked. "You got out of the scrape we left you in sooner than we thought you would. And you managed to get the launch off, too. Now, I'll make a bargain with you. I'll let you have your boat and the young lady back in exchange for the launch, if you shut off power, take to your rowboat, and let the launch drift down to us."

"I'll make no such arrangement with you," retorted Fred. "I doubt if you'd keep your part of the agreement once you got possession of the launch, and had us at a disadvantage in the rowboat."

"We'll do the square thing all right. We have no use for the girl, while the launch would be of great advantage to us."

"Put Miss Darling ashore on the bank, and maybe I'll consider the matter then."

Jax turned to Redgrave, and said something to him.

They talked together for a minute and then Jax spoke up again.

"We'll put the girl ashore if you'll set the launch adrift at the same time."

"No," replied Fred. "I'll tell you what I'll do with you. Work the sailboat inshore, the three of you land, and set her adrift as she is, and as soon as we get possession of her we'll run the launch close in and leave her. That's the only bargain I'll make with you. I want Miss Darling and all the stuff you stole from the houses in our town."

Jax ripped out an oath at the coolness of Fred's proposition.

"What do you think we are?" he roared, angrily. "Pull away now, or I'll put a bullet into you."

"Get under cover," said Fred to Bert.

His companion bent down out of sight.

"You refuse to give up Miss Darling, do you?" Fred called out to Jax.

The man's reply was to pull the trigger of his revolver, and a ball whistled past the boy's head.

Fred snatched up the rifle and, taking a quick aim at Jax, fired.

The ball struck the crook's hand that held the revolver, and the weapon fell into the water with a splash, while the rascal uttered a howl of pain, and a volley of oaths.

His companions were paralyzed for a moment with astonishment.

Then both Redgrave and Yates discharged their revolvers at the intrepid boy on the launch.

Their aim was hurried, and neither bullet hit Fred.

The boy, however, returned the fusillade with such good effect that both of the rascals were wounded, and fell to the floor of the cockpit, leaving the boat without a guiding hand.

Consequently she fell away, her sail shivered, and she lost all headway.

"Get up, Bert!" cried Fred. "I've got them now where I want them. Steer the launch alongside the Katydid, and I'll make short work of Jax if he doesn't give in."

Bert obeyed orders.

Jax, however, was not conquered, by any means.

With a face distorted with rage, he picked up one of his companions' weapons with his left hand, and aimed it at Fred.

The boy wasn't taking any more chances than he could help, so he fired squarely at the rascal, who staggered back against the side of the little cabin with a rifle ball in his breast.

The fight was over, and Fred was master of the situation.

The launch was run alongside of the sailboat and made fast.

"Keep an eye on those chaps," said the young surveyor, handing Bert the rifle.

Fred stepped into the cockpit, and without paying any attention to the wounded burglars he stuck his head in at the cabin slide.

"Dora," he said, "are you there?"

He heard a smothered exclamation, and entering the cabin found the terrified girl crouching in a corner.

"Thank heaven I have recovered you at last, Dora!" he said, advancing to her.

With a little scream of joy she sprang to her feet and rushed into his arms.

"Oh, Fred, Fred!" she sobbed. "You are safe, aren't you?" She impulsively threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, and cried over him in a hysterical way.

"I'm all right," he replied reassuringly, feeling very happy over her tumultuous exhibition of regard for him.

"I was so afraid those men had done something dreadful to you," she cried, laying her head on his shoulder. "They left you on the launch, didn't they?"

"Yes."

"And how did you escape?"

"I'll tell you all about it later on. All I can say now is that I owe my release to Bert Barlow."

"What has happened to those men? I heard firing, and it seemed to me one or more of them were shot."

"The three of them were shot."

"Are they dead?" she asked, with a little shudder.

"No; but I couldn't say how badly they are injured. I didn't care much where I hit them when I fired."

"Did you shoot them?" she asked, opening her eyes very wide.

"I did. I was determined to save you from a situation that I knew must be terrible to you. They refused to give you up peaceably, and fired upon me first, so should their wounds have a fatal result their blood will be on their own heads."

"Oh, why did they act that way toward us? What kind of men are they? I begged them to go back for you, but they only laughed at me, and said they'd put me ashore somewhere down the river at dark. I was so frightened. I could not understand their actions at all. I feared they might be crazy people who had escaped from some asylum."

"They are not crazy, Dora, but very dangerous men. They are the burglars who robbed your father's house, as well as the Jenkins and Starbuck residences."

"Oh, Fred, is that true?" with a nervous glance at the cabin entrance, through which, now that she was more composed, she could see the forms of two of the unconscious rascals huddled up in the cockpit.

"Yes, it is true. Come, let me take you on board the launch. I'm going to tow the sailboat up to Creston, and the sooner we start the better. Don't be alarmed," as she hung back. "The danger is all over."

"But I am afraid to pass those men," she said.

"Brace up, Dora. Nothing is going to happen to you while I am with you," he replied reassuringly.

Then she allowed him to lead her out into the cockpit, where the crooks lay.

He lifted her over into the launch, and told her to run into the cabin and stay there.

Fred told Bert to lower the Katydid's mainsail while he took a look at the wounded burglars.

Redgrave was unconscious from the shock of a bullet which had ploughed a furrow above his temple, while Yates' injury consisted of a broken collar-bone, the ball having passed out through the back part of his neck.

Jax's wound was apparently the most serious of the three, so far as Fred could see, for the bullet had passed completely through his chest, coming out through the back of his coat.

He was not unconscious, but seemed to be in a bad way.

"Give me some water," he asked hoarsely of the boy.

Fred got him some water, and then gave him some of the liquor which still remained in the cut-glass decanter.

This revived him, and Fred was able to get him down into the cabin, and upon one of the lockers, where he propped his head up with a pillow.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRED ACHIEVES WEALTH AND HAPPINESS.

"Don't leave me, boy," said Jax, catching Fred by the sleeve of his jacket as he made a movement to return on deck.

"I've got to get the boats underway. It's coming on dark, and we can't go on drifting down the river."

"Promise me that you will come back. I've something of great importance to tell you—something that I want you to do for me."

His tone was so earnest and insistent that Fred, somewhat against his inclination, agreed to return after he had got the boats headed up the river.

"Tell me one thing more—are Redgrave and Yates done up for good?"

"No. They are unconscious, but not seriously wounded as far as I can see."

"Did you intend to bring them in here?"

"I'm going to carry them in right away."

"Don't do it until after I have told you what I have to say. It is a secret that mustn't reach their ears."

"They won't hear anything in their present condition."

"They may recover their senses at any moment. And what I have to tell is not for them to know. You will say so, too, after you have heard it."

"All right," replied Fred, who decided to humor the wounded man.

He then returned to the deck and, with Bert's assistance, laid Redgrave and Yates out as comfortable as possible in the cockpit.

After that they fixed a tow-line from the stern of the launch to the bow of the Katydid.

Then he showed Bert how to start the engine, and called Dora on deck.

"I'm going to remain on the catboat in charge of the prisoners," he said to them, "until we reach Creston, where we'll hand them over to the police. You and Dora can keep each other company till you see me again."

Dora wasn't particularly pleased with this arrangement, but she didn't feel as if she ought to make any objection, as she believed Fred was doing things for the best.

So Fred returned on board the sailboat, and after Bert had got well under way, and he saw everything was running right, he re-entered the cabin.

Jax was lying just as he had left him, but he seemed to be much weaker than before.

"Give me another drink of that whisky," he said, faintly. "I feel as if I haven't many hours' life left in me. That last shot of yours has done the business."

"I hope not," said Fred, earnestly, as he handed him part of a glass of the liquor.

"You hope not? Why did you shoot me, then?"

"To save myself. You had me covered point blank with that revolver. If you'd pulled the trigger an instant before I did you'd have had me dead to rights."

"I guess I would," replied Jax, with a faint smile. "Well, fortune was against me. You were the lucky one, and there isn't any use of my complaining at this stage of the game. Now, boy, I want you to do me a favor."

"If it's the right kind of a favor I'll do it," replied Fred.

"You won't lose anything by it, I can tell you that. I've got a wife and child, and an old mother in New York City. They don't know that I am a professional crook. I wouldn't have them learn the truth for anything. I didn't leave them very well fixed, but I expected to reap enough on this trip north to place them forever above want. I intended to shake old associations and become a square man once more, but fate has decided otherwise. I'll never live to see them again, and I want you to promise to do the square thing by them if I tell you a secret that'll put a pile of money in your pocket."

"A pile of money in my pocket!" exclaimed Fred, wondering if the man was growing light-headed.

"Yes, a pile of money. All in good, yellow gold. I've seen it with my own eyes, so I know what I'm talking about. It's a treasure trove that I and two companions discovered in the hills not so many miles from here about a year ago. We quarreled over the division of it, and they attempted to do me out of my share of it. But I fixed them—oh, yes, I fixed them all right. I got them drunk, tied them back to back to a tree, and left them with a bag of gold apiece in front of them, so that when they got sober, and freed themselves, they couldn't say I had cleaned them out completely. Then I removed the rest of the money and buried it in another spot till I could bring a boat up the river and carry it away with me. But I didn't get the chance to do that till lately, and then my plan miscarried on account of Redgrave and Yates, who I had got acquainted with during a six-months' term on the Island. We three were freed on the same day, and they stuck closer to me than brothers ever since. They planned the Brentwood burglaries, and persuaded me to join them, which I did rather against my will at first. But once I got started in my old work again I became as interested as they. My plan was to shake them as soon as we had disposed of the swag, and then carry out my scheme to recover the buried money which would have made me independent for life. No doubt I would have succeeded but for those unlucky rocks in the rapids above here. The stranding of the launch queered us for keeps, and you put the finishing touch to it all."

"Do you mean to say that you tied two men to a tree back to back in the hills surrounding Clear Lake, and—"

"How do you know that it was in the hills surrounding

"Clear Lake?" asked Jax, interrupting him with feverish intensity.

"How do I know? Why, because a week ago I and my companion, who is now running the launch, were up there surveying a plot of ground, and we came across two dead men in the position you describe, with a bag of gold alongside each of them."

"What!" almost shrieked Jax, glaring at Fred. "You found two dead men—with the gold beside them?"

"I did. One was on one side of the tree, his companion on the other. Their arms were tied at the elbows. It was plain to be seen they had starved to death."

"Is this the solemn truth?" he cried, a bloody froth rising to his lips.

"It is the truth."

"My heavens! I did not mean to kill them. I expected they would be able to work themselves loose next day, and make off with the shares of the money I left to them."

"Evidently you made too good a job of the tying, for they couldn't get loose. Otherwise we shouldn't have found their half-decayed corpses there. Nor the money, either."

Jax was terribly overcome by the knowledge that he had unwittingly committed a double murder.

"No wonder I never got any good of the money, except the very small amount I carried away with me at the time. No wonder this trip has turned out as it has, and I have received my death wound. For me this gold was accursed. But you, boy," he cried, with a feverish eagerness, "can go there and get it and turn it to good use. I will tell you where I buried it. All I ask is that you will swear to divide it fairly with the only beings on earth I care for. Will you do this?"

"I will, if you solemnly assure me that it is not stolen money."

"It is not stolen money. It is a treasure trove. It fairly belongs to me, as I found it."

"If it belongs honestly to you then it all ought to go to your relatives."

"I do not ask that. There is more there than they will ever need. I give you one-half of it—I will it to you by word of mouth—in consideration of your promise to go and get it and send my people the other half. Do you accept the trust?"

"I do, and if what you have told me is the truth I will faithfully execute your wishes in the matter."

"That is all I wish to know," said the dying man. "Light a candle or something, for it is growing dark. I want you to write down the directions I shall give you."

Fred got the lantern which hung in a corner, and brought it to the locker where Jax lay.

"Give me another drink, for my strength is going fast," he said.

Fred handed it to him, and then took out his note-book and a pencil.

"Write down 'Mrs. Frances Jex, — E. Twenty-first street, New York.'"

Fred did so.

"When you send the money give them no hint of my true character, but say I died of heart disease, or something of that sort, that I am buried out here, and that the money belonged to me. Will you do that?"

"I will."

"Now put your hand in my inner vest pocket. You will find a paper. Take it out."

Fred followed directions and brought forth the paper.

"That contains all the necessary directions to find the spot where the money lies buried. Read it over, and let me know if you thoroughly understand it."

Fred read it carefully over and said it was sufficiently plain.

"Put it in your pocket and be careful of it. Recover the money as soon as you can, and carry out my wishes. Do you promise me that on your word of honor?"

"I do," replied Fred, earnestly, as he took Jax's hand in his.

Just then Fred noticed that the sailboat had come to a rest, and he heard Bert calling to him.

"I must leave you now, Mr. Jax," he said, in a sympathetic voice. "Perhaps you will recover after all. A doctor will be able to say when he examines you. At any rate I hope you will, for I would prefer not to have your death on my hands."

He gave the man another drink to revive him, and then left the cabin, to find the boats close to one of the Creston wharves.

Pulling on the tow-line, he worked the Katydid up to the launch and boarded her.

Then he took the launch alongside the nearest wharf and made her fast.

"Bert, run up to the police station, and tell the officer in charge that we have the Brentwood burglars on board, ready to turn over to the authorities. Say they are all wounded, one perhaps fatally, and that they must send a wagon and a surgeon."

Bert started off on his errand, leaving Fred and Dora together.

"I hope you won't blame me too severely for getting you into trouble, Dora," said the boy. "When I invited you to take the sail I could not foresee the unfortunate ending of the excursion."

"Blame you, Fred!" she said, taking his hand in hers. "No. Why should I? You were not responsible for what has happened. Besides, did you not afterward risk your life to get me away from those men? Neither mother nor father will blame you, either. They will say you did all in your power to protect me. Then you have recovered all our property that was stolen, as well as the property taken from the homes of the Jenkinses and the Starbucks. You have fairly earned the reward offered, and I congratulate you on winning it."

In three-quarters of an hour Bert returned with a wagon containing three policemen and a physician.

The doctor shook his head over Jax, and he was removed to the town hospital, while the other two were patched up and carried to the city lock-up.

As soon as the prisoners were taken away Fred started the launch up the river toward Brentwood, with the sailboat in tow, passing the rapids with the aid of the moonlight.

The launch was secured at Barclay's wharf, and then Fred took Dora home and told the thrilling story of their adventures during the afternoon.

Next day Fred Stuart found himself a hero, as the news of his capture of the burglars and the recovery of their plunder spread all over town like wildfire.

Jax died in the Creston hospital that afternoon, the other two rascals, recovered from their wounds, were tried in due course, convicted, and sent to the State prison for a term of years.

The reward of \$3,000 was divided between Fred and Bert, though the former got all the glory of the affair, which, as a matter of fact, he deserved.

The day Bert put his \$1,500 in the bank he discovered his lost bag of gold behind a small bookcase in his room.

He had not the slightest idea how it got there, but Fred, when he heard about it, said Bert must have put it there in his sleep, notwithstanding that his friend asserted that never to his knowledge had he walked in his sleep in his life.

A few days after the trial and conviction of the robbers Fred told Bert about the buried money, and asked him to help in its recovery and removal.

They got a few days' vacation for the purpose, took the launch up to Swan Creek, went over to the lake, and digging at the spot described in the paper, found gold coin in bags to the value of \$75,000.

Fred kept perfect faith with the dead Jax, and sent his family in New York City exactly half of the amount recovered.

With a part of his share he immediately purchased the property at the lake which had attracted him as a splendid hotel site.

Soon afterward he made a deal with a well-known hotel man, and sold the property at a big advance on his original investment.

Fred, during the following spring, surveyed the new extension of the trolley line to Taylorville, and thenceforward took that branch of Mr. Fisher's business entirely on his hands.

Subsequently he became Mr. Fisher's partner in the entire business, and not long afterward the accepted suitor for Dora Darling's hand.

On his twenty-second birthday they were married, and no happier couple than they reside in Brentwood, where he is still alluded to as the Young Surveyor of Happy Valley.

Next week's issue will contain "BOSS OF THE MARKET; OR, THE GREATEST BOY IN WALL STREET."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

In Siberia is comprised one-tenth of all the land surface of the globe. The United States, Great Britain, and all Europe, except Russia, could be put into Siberia, with a big corner to spare.

Andrew Osborne, 64, of Congers, N. Y., was crushed to death at Rockland Lake when a big boulder, loosened by a dynamite blast, rolled down Hook Mountain and struck him. After being set free it dropped 600 feet and then rolled till it hit Osborne.

Mrs. C. M. Johnson, eighty years old, accompanied her son, Floyd M. Young, to "Young's Retreat," Atlanta, Ga., recently and beat him at pistol target practice. Mrs. Johnson has been known for years as a crack shot. Her son has offered a ticket to the Panama Exposition to any woman of her age who can beat her.

The little fish called the anchovy is found in large quantities in the Mediterranean Sea and on the coasts of Spain, Portugal and France, where extensive fisheries are carried on during the months of May, June and July. Sardines are also abundant in the Mediterranean, and are also found in the Atlantic.

Five hundred persons are searching the mountains in the vicinity of Elkins, W. Va., for trace of Mrs. Elizabeth Riffe, seventy, who disappeared from her home recently. Thirty years ago the woman's son, four years old, wandered into the mountains and never returned. Since then she has often gone on excursions into the hills in the belief that she would find him.

Mrs. Annie Olson is believed to be the first housewife in the United States to "move" by parcel post. Postoffice clerks were astounded recently when she demanded stamps for conveyance of her household goods from Seattle to Quinault, Wash. "I figured it would be cheaper this way," said Mrs. Olson, handing in a barrel containing her kitchen stove. Other articles of furniture followed, weighing in all 337 pounds and including kitchen utensils, a rocking-chair and a dining-room table, among other things. The moving cost her \$4.62 in stamps. It cost her \$20 the old way, she said.

When Arthur Cunningham, a druggist, became intoxicated he desired to take a nap. He wandered about the streets, then climbed a stairway to the home of Miss Sadie Thompson, Columbus, Ind. He opened a door without knocking and found he was in the bathroom. The tub looked inviting, so he crawled in and went to sleep. Later when Miss Thompson went to the bathroom and opened the door she screamed louder than a woman is supposed to scream when she finds a man under the bed. She telephoned the police that there was a man in her bathtub. Two officers removed him.

Socialism appears to be making active progress in Europe through force of circumstances resulting from the war. In Germany all the industries appear to be under the control of the government, and Great Britain is to take in hand the organization of war industries in a big and thorough way. A committee has been provided with absolutely full and complete powers, presided over by the chancellor of the exchequer himself, and including representatives of the admiralty, the war office, the treasury, the Board of Trade and others. The whole country is to be mapped out, and every available factory and workshop is to be drawn into the scheme.

Electric-pneumatic brakes are soon to displace the air-brakes used on the passenger trains of the Pennsylvania railroad. This form of brake has been found necessary because of the weight of trains made up of all-steel cars. In long trains the shock and surging accompanying the application of the brakes has proved very objectionable indeed. In a twelve-car train it takes eight seconds for the full braking force to be felt at the last car. With the electro-pneumatic brake, the braking power will be exerted at the same instant on all the cars, and within two seconds after the application of the brakes, the whole braking force will be exerted throughout the train.

The last number of *L'Astronomie* is chiefly devoted to the subject of "the giant sun Canopus." Though somewhat less bright than Sirius, on account of its vastly greater distance from us, Canopus is much the larger star. Its volume is supposed to be 2,420,000 times that of the sun, and its brilliancy 49,700 times. Walkey's computations seem to show that Canopus actually occupies a central position in the stellar universe, as we know it. The sun is credited with a distance of 489 light-years from this central luminary, around which it is said to describe an orbit the plane of which is inclined at an angle of 20 degrees to the plane of the galaxy. The sun's last periastron passage is stated to have occurred 6,950,000 years ago. The whole subject is, of course, highly speculative.

We are told in the current newspapers that Alexander Foster Humphrey, of Pittsburgh, has invented a bullet supplied with narcotics and antiseptics, the former to relieve the pain of a wound and the latter to aid the healing operations. At least two patents have been issued for narcotizing bullets, both especially designed for use in capturing the lower animals. One patent issued in 1910 to James Francis O'Byrne and Thomas A. Flood, of Salt Lake City, for a bullet carrying a narcotic whose anaesthetic effect when shot into a fleshy portion of an animal would so affect it as to render its capture and control comparatively easy. The other patent was issued in 1911 to K. Burgsmuller, of Kreiensen, Germany, for a cartridge filled with a mixture of capsicine in an immediately gasifiable form for narcotizing animals.

THE GOLDEN GROTTO

— OR —

TWO BOYS' SEARCH FOR NO-NO LAND

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXII (continued)

"By gosh! It shows their good sense! I am not hankering after it myself."

"You're talking as if you knew where the Golden Grotto was and could go straight to it. Hadn't you better ask the wounded man how to get to it?"

"As usual, Edith, you bring us to our bearings. Say, Tom, try and find out from our savage friend how we are to get there, and be quick about it."

Tom and the savage had a long talk, after which Tom explained that the entrance to the Golden Grotto was by a group of palm trees which could be seen on the top of a bluff. It seemed so near that the boys could scarcely credit what they heard, but in reply to further questions the savage stuck to his story and nothing remained but to believe him.

They were very close to the shore now, and the enemy was not very far away. Indeed, the canoes were so near that they could hear the fierce shouts of the savages. Many of them were standing up, facing Frank and his friends and brandishing their spears and axes over their heads.

"Well, I would rather die in the Golden Grotto," said Ben, "than be carved up for those fellows' dinners. What do you say, Tom?"

Tom said nothing, but his look was very expressive. He talked freely to his native friends, and the canoe fairly flew along until it grated on the beach.

"All ashore!" cried Jack.

"There's no need to tell us that!" remarked Edith.

Regardless of the water, they sprang out, dashing along in frantic haste, two of the black crew carrying the wounded savage.

The enemy was very close now, and long before the foot of the bluff was reached the savages had landed and were hurrying after the fugitives.

"We must keep them back," said Frank.

"But how?"

"While you and I and Ben will stay here and fire at them, Edith goes on with Tom and the others."

"I won't leave you," said Edith.

"You must. What I propose is for our own good as well as yours. We don't intend to stay here, Edith, but after we have scared them a bit, we will run after you, and we'll soon catch up."

"You had better go, Edith," said Ben, and Edith went, for she generally paid great attention to advice given by the old seaman.

"Don't shoot to kill!" said Frank.

"They deserve it!"

"Never mind that, Jack. We only want to save ourselves. We're not their judges."

Crack! Crack!

The shots were fired over the savages' heads and the effect produced was great. Every man threw himself on the ground, with his face almost buried in the sand, and they seemed as if they were afraid to look up.

"That's given them fits!" cried Jack. "Wonder how long they'll keep on doing the ostrich trick?"

"I am not going to stay and see," answered Frank, darting away. "You can if you like."

But Jack, by the speed which he displayed as he passed Frank, showed that he was able to master his curiosity. They struggled up the bluff toward the palm trees, and when they reached them Tom came forward.

He pointed to a deep hole in the ground.

"Massa! Dat's it," he said.

Forgetting the savages for the instant, they stood there spellbound, for they believed that they were standing at the entrance to the Golden Grotto!

CHAPTER XXIII.

MORGAN THREATENS FRANK AND HIS FRIENDS.

"Shiver me!" cried Ben, "but it looks more like a coal pit than a gold mine. It's dark as pitch, and may be as deep as the sea."

"If it's very deep, we'll never get down," said Jack.

"Guess this ought to give us a good idea!" observed Frank.

As he spoke, he stood at the brink and dropped a large stone down the hole.

Crash!

They could hear it strike, which showed that there was solid ground down below, and it seemed as if the shaft was not so deep as it appeared to be.

"I am going down," cried Frank. "We will do as we did yesterday—lower ourselves down with a rope."

"And supposing the rope is not long enough to reach the bottom?"

"Then, Jack, you must pull me up again."

It was a perilous adventure, and no one liked to see

Frank undertake it, but it was quite plain that some one must go, so they contented themselves with advising him what to do.

"Very kind of you," said Frank, laughingly, "but not very valuable, for none of you know what I am going to encounter. Still, I am not tired of life yet, so you may be sure I am not going to throw it away."

Gently, they lowered him down, and when he was hidden in the blackness of the pit, everybody shuddered. But this feeling was short-lived, for very soon Frank's cheery voice was heard shouting:

"It's all right down here, and the rope's long enough."

"Take your last look at the sky, Edith," said Jack, jestingly, "for you'll never see it again."

"Guess you're right there!" growled Ben.

Edith was lowered next, and then the wounded savage. The latter yelled and struggled. According to his idea, it was death for one of his low rank to enter the sacred Grotto. But if he stayed behind, he would probably be killed for having betrayed the whereabouts of the Grotto to Frank, and so Ben and Jack thought they were acting for the best.

All this time the savages had been drawing nearer, and had only been kept back by occasional shots. When Ben alone was left they started up the bluff, apparently determined to capture him, so he had to fire into them and not over them, as he had done before. He dropped two savages and the rest halted, and Ben took advantage of this to descend. Just as he reached the bottom, there was a savage yell from the mouth of the pit and a spear came whistling past Ben's head. He instantly stepped back out of danger and joined his friends who were near, but hidden in the darkness.

"This doesn't look much like a Golden Grotto," muttered Jack.

"Didn't know you could see in the dark," rejoined Frank. "However, we must get a light and see where we are, or we may fall into some hole there's no getting out of."

Scarcely had Frank spoken when a great flame shot up at some distance from where he and his friends stood, and instantly the vault in which they were was filled with a dazzling light. One moment later, and everything was as dark as before."

"How wonderful!" said Edith. "I can't understand how it was done."

"It's very easy to understand that we are not the only people in this place," observed Frank.

"Did you see anybody?"

"No, Edith, but that blaze of light was the result of human agency, and I am going to investigate."

"Better be careful," said Ben.

"You don't need to tell me that. We won't strike any light just yet, because we can walk straight along to our right without any danger. While that fire was burning I saw enough to show me that. Keep your hand on the wall, and then you won't stray off the line."

The party moved forward, and after traveling twenty yards Frank stumbled against something, and immediately he felt a pair of arms coil around his legs.

"Strike a light!" he shouted to Ben, and he exerted himself to the utmost to prevent being thrown to the ground. Stooping down, he tried to loosen the grasp in which he was held by his mysterious assailant.

The lantern was lit in a moment now, and they saw what had caused the alarm. It was a little man of extreme age who was clinging to Frank's legs and chanting a kind of song as he did so. His body was emaciated to such a degree that it seemed wonderful he was able to exist. The instant the light appeared on the scene, two other men, exact copies of the first, appeared, and the three now stood barring the way.

"The guardians of the Grotto," said Frank. "Well, I don't want to treat them roughly, but they will have to go. Tom, just have these old fellows put out of our way."

Tom spoke a few words to his black crew, and in a few moments the old men were seized. Then Frank and his friends stepped forward in a little recess in which a small fire was burning. Near this fire was a huge tank, which was found to be filled with oil. It was evident that the great blaze they had seen was caused by oil being poured upon the flame.

Frank filled a great shell with oil and poured it on the fire. Instantly the place in which they stood was one blaze of light.

As long as it lasted, they stared around them in amazement. The walls, the roof and the floor of the vault were glittering like gold.

"We've found the Golden Grotto!" cried Jack, joyfully, and appearances certainly justified the exclamation.

A careful examination showed them that the glittering substance was really gold. Jack asserted that the Grotto had been hewn out of solid gold, but this was wrong. The gold, which was of considerable thickness, had evidently been brought to the cavern, and the rocky walls had been lined with the golden plates.

"Anyway, our fortune's made," said Frank.

"We've only to fly out of this pit with the stuff," said Ben, sarcastically, "and that's dead easy."

"Perhaps those fellows have gone," Jack observed.

"Come on, Jack. Let's go back to the shaft. We may hear something."

"Hello!" cried Frank, looking up and shouting, as soon as he reached there.

"Ship ahoy!" came the answer, and the sound of it startled them.

"I know that voice!" cried Jack.

"Sure, my lad, you do! I'm Jim Morgan. I've got you all just where I wanted you, and if any of you ever come out of there alive, I'll give you leave to kick me from here to Loango."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"Morgan is alive, then," said Jack.

"He appears to be very much alive," Frank remarked.

Edith and Ben, coming up, were acquainted with the state of affairs, and the old seaman expressed himself strongly.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

A WOMAN STRIVES TO BECOME A LAWYER.

Fired with the ambition to become a lawyer that she may obtain the freedom of her husband, who is serving a life sentence for murder in Oklahoma, Mrs. Mamie Baker, dividing her time between her duties as a household servant and attending public school, has advanced from the bottom of the grammar grades to the high school in less than two years. Mrs. Baker is a Bohemian and unfamiliarity with the American language has been an additional drawback in her way, but she is rapidly overcoming all obstacles.

A LOST POCKETBOOK FOUND.

In 1888 a man now living in the West attended the Perry County Fair Grounds at Newport, Pa., and on the fair grounds found a pocketbook containing \$5 and a small trinket. A Newport paper carried under "lost and found" an advertisement, inserted by W. D. Ballinger, of Millerstown, which stated that the owner would receive his property by identifying the trinket. Mr. Ballinger stated that a friend recently sent him the pocketbook, the trinket and a \$5 bill, with interest and money to defray the cost of advertising.

SNAKES CAUSES AUTO WRECK.

James Morrison, of Orange, N. J., went automobiling with his family the other afternoon, and when over the Second Mountain drove into a dirt road so that his wife and two children could pick wild flowers. They left the car under a large oak tree and sauntered off.

Half an hour later Mrs. Morrison and her two children returned to the car for the return trip. Coiled up on the front seat was a large copperhead snake. The mother and children, dropping the flowers, ran away screaming.

Mr. Morrison returned to the car, and as the branches hung low over it, pushed it back to the macadam road of Eagle Rock avenue. Getting a stout club from the woods, he swung at the snake, missed it, and accidentally gave the car a push, and down the hill it went.

The grade was very steep and the automobile ran through a wooden fence into the farm of Jacob Miller, striking a calf, killing a couple of chickens and finally halting after it had torn away part of Miller's back porch. By this time there was not much left of the car, and Mr. Morrison with his wife and two children walked four miles home. The snake escaped.

THE KAISER'S TRAIN.

The most luxurious train in Europe, a veritable palace on wheels, says a contributor to Tit-Bits, is that which the Kaiser uses when he travels between Berlin and the fighting line.

Six coaches, each weighing over 60 tons, compose the special train, and of these four are reserved for the Emperor and his suite, and the other two are used for kitchens. The second coach in the train is the one re-

served by the Kaiser for his personal quarters, and it contains a salon, bedrooms, dressing-room, bathroom and sleeping apartments for his bodyguard. The salon is paneled in the wood of an ancient cedar tree taken from Mount Lebanon, the gift of ex-Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey. The door is of black wood taken from the piles of a wooden bridge built across the Rhine by Julius Cæsar in the year 55 B. C., and the ceiling is decorated with a design representing the six great rivers of Germany.

The windows of the salon are protected by thick steel bars, and armed sentries stand at the doors of the apartment night and day. The last coach in the train is used by an engineer, who has charge of the machinery that operates a complicated system of emergency brakes. The Kaiser's two dachshunds, Wardl and Hexl, have their kennels on the train, and they generally accompany their master on his travels.

THE GREATEST SEAPORT.

New York is the greatest of the world's ports, and the Industrial Bureau of the Merchants' Association has vouched for the fact.

Of the ten largest ports listed in the returns for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1913, New York comes first, her imports and exports reaching the enormous figure of \$1,973,981,693. London comes second with \$1,791,857,641, while Hamburg and Liverpool run one another close for third place, with \$1,674,187,176 and \$1,637,280,476, respectively.

The commercial growth of New York, naturally, depends on that of the American nation, and its prosperity has been steadily increasing year by year. Statistics for 1862 show the imports of the United States to be \$189,356,677 and its exports to be \$190,670,501. New York alone, therefore, has to-day over five times the amount of commerce which was carried on by the whole United States half a century ago.

But how comes it that New York should stand so high in the list of the world's great ports, while the rest of America's cities are not even mentioned?

Well, the value of a city to a nation depends greatly on its position on the map. Take that of New York. It has 748 miles of direct waterfront.

Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans and Boston together have less than 100 miles.

But New York's prosperity is likely to increase even more rapidly in years to come. The Panama Canal, open to commerce, means that Yokohama is nearer by 1,600 miles to Manhattan Harbor than it is to Liverpool. The distance to Sidney is lessened by 2,500 miles. Wellington is 4,000 and Valparaiso 2,574 miles nearer.

Moreover, the opening of the two other artificial waterways, the Erie and Lake Champlain canals, will help to bring about this desired consummation. Not only will large markets be thus opened to the New York manufacturer, but large sources of raw materials will also be placed at his disposal.

JOLLY JACK JONES

—OR—

KNOCKING ABOUT THE WORLD

By ED. KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER VI.

MYSTERY.

Jack found himself hustled down into the cabin before he knew it.

The place was sumptuously furnished.

Mr. Dobbs brought out whisky now, and tried to make Jack drink, but the boy would not touch a drop.

"Well, if you won't, I will," exclaimed the jolly broker, and he turned down half a tumblerful of the raw stuff.

"What's your name, boy?" he demanded, turning abruptly on Jack.

"Jack Jones, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"New York. I'm just knocking about the world with my banjo, boss. I don't belong anywhere in particular."

"How much was that boat worth that we ran down?"

"It wasn't my boat, sir."

"I didn't ask you whose boat it was. I asked you how much it was worth."

"You ask me too much, for I don't know."

"Will that pay for it?"

Mr. Dobbs produced five twenty-dollar bills and threw them across the table to Jack.

"More than pay it," replied Jack. "I don't feel as if I ought to take this money, sir. The boat wasn't mine."

"That's all right. You can settle with the owner when you see him or you need never settle with him. If you like you can consider the money part pay in advance for a little business I want you to do for me."

"Hello," thought Jack. "It's coming now. I knew there was a string to that hundred dollars. This man is no drunken fool!"

Mr. Dunning Dobbs threw himself into a chair, and, putting his feet on the table, lit a huge cigar.

"Smoke, boy?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied Jack.

"Nor drink, either? You are one of the good kind. Well, we have to have 'em, but can you keep your mouth shut if you are paid to do it?"

"Sure," grinned Jack.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" roared Mr. Dobbs. "That's the way you keep it shut, eh? That's right! Smile, grin, laugh, roar! Any old thing, so long as you keep jolly, keep the banjo going, and don't say one word about what you see or hear this night."

These last words were the key to the whole speech, and were spoken in a very impressive way.

"Yes," said Jack, beginning to tune up the banjo.

"Something else is coming," he thought.

"And when we get through there'll be another hundred dollars coming," added Mr. Dobbs, half closing his eyes and puffing out an immense quantity of smoke.

"Yes," said Jack, picking the chorus of the "Hot Time" with his hand across the strings to muffle the sound.

"By Jove, boy, you are all right," said Mr. Dobbs. "Blame me if you aren't the slickest proposition I've run up against in some time. Can you drive a horse?"

"Why, sure."

"Better yet; I can, too. I am owner of the finest horse you ever laid eyes on, but I don't want to be seen driving to-night, so you must drive for me—see?"

"Yes, sir."

"And there will be a hot time and don't you forget it. Now, slide on deck, jolly them all you wish, but don't talk. I'm going to turn in now. Along towards midnight I shall want you."

"All right, sir," said Jack, and he immediately left the cabin.

"That man is a crook just as sure as I can play the banjo," he said to himself. "He wants to use me. All right; let him. He can use me just so far, but he can't make me go crooked nohow, and maybe I can make another before I get through."

Evidently it was Mr. Dobbs' intention to remain where he was for the present.

The afternoon passed away, and the evening followed it, but he did not appear on deck again.

Dick Darrage declared that he was sobering up, and certainly there were others on board the Komado who needed to do the same.

Captain Bills was not seen again all the afternoon or evening.

Jack played and sang and kept the crew in good humor.

At six o'clock the steward called them all to supper, and Jack went with the rest.

"Is he going ashore to-night?" Dick Darrage asked in a low voice, as they sat side by side at the table.

"I don't know anything about his business," laughed Jack. "Why do you ask?"

"Because the last time we came in here he went ashore at midnight, and was gone for two days—that's all."

"That so? Where did he go?"

"Couldn't tell you. Didn't know but he had been telling you something while you were hobnobbing with him in the cabin."

"Oh, we were only talking banjo," laughed Jack.

But here was another point learned.

Jack made up his mind that he was bound off on some trip with Mr. Dunning Dobbs that night.

His supposition proved quite correct, for just before eleven o'clock, while he was lying stretched out upon a settee half asleep, with his banjo on his breast, he was suddenly aroused by someone shaking his shoulder, and there stood Mr. Dobbs differently dressed, wearing a light overcoat and a high hat.

"Come, Jack, get up," he said in a low voice. "You are going ashore with me."

Dick Darrage and another sailor pulled them ashore in the yacht's small boat.

They landed at the foot of a wooded hill, and Mr. Dobbs ordered the boat back.

"You'll get my whistle when I want you," he said. "There's no telling how long it may be. Come, Jack."

They climbed the hill, and, passing on through the woods, soon came in sight of a road.

"Now, Jack," said Mr. Dobbs, "you take this letter, follow the road to the left about half a mile until you come to a place where there are two big pine trees, one on either side. There will be, or ought to be, a team there waiting. If it is there give the man with it this letter and say: 'Mr. Mansfield has changed his mind and sent me.' Then take the team and drive back along the road until you meet me. Make sure that you are not being followed. If you have any reason to think you are being followed drive right past me and keep on going till you come to the first tavern you strike and there put up for the night. Do you understand all this?"

"Yes, sir, but suppose the team isn't there?"

"Wait till it comes. Here, give me your banjo to keep for you—of course you won't want that."

"No, sir, my banjo goes with me. I would not part with it under any consideration."

"But it will only be in your way."

"Can't help it, sir. My banjo is my brother. We always stick together—see?"

"You are as stubborn as you are sharp," replied Mr. Dobbs. "Never mind, we won't argue. Go ahead. There's no time to be lost."

With his banjo under his arm, Jack struck out upon the road, and hurried on, wondering what all this maneuvering could mean.

Jack came to the two big pine trees in about ten minutes.

The team was there waiting. It was a covered buggy with a span of fine horses.

"Hello!" cried Jack, coming up to the man who stood near it. "Mr. Mansfield has changed his mind and sent me. This letter is for you, I guess."

The man struck a flamer and hastily read the letter.

"All right. Take the team," he said. "Be a bit careful of that air off boss. Don't give him too much rein. He likes to let the other one do all the work."

"I'll look out," said Jack, and, putting his banjo on the seat, he jumped in and drove up the road.

He had not gone far before Mr. Dobbs stepped out of the woods and held up his hand.

Jack stopped. He had glanced behind from time to time, and was sure he was not being followed.

"All right," said Mr. Dobbs, getting in. "Now, drive like blazes, Jack, and take the first turning to the left."

It was five miles to the first turning on the left, and this was a mere wood road which led into the loneliest country Jack had ever seen.

On they went, up one hill and down another, over a road so rough that it seemed to Jack that the buggy must break every instant, until at last they came out into a clearing where stood an old stone mansion directly under a mountain, which towered up, a mass of rocks, to the height of a thousand feet and more.

"Pull in here, Jack," ordered Mr. Dobbs.

Then, taking an ivory whistle from his pocket, he blew it twice.

Where all had been dark about the house before, a light now appeared in one of the upper windows, which, after an instant, was opened and a man, thrusting his head out, called:

"All right."

"All right," was the answer. "You're in good time."

"Here's mystery," thought Jack. "What can it mean?"

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT SORT OF A GANG IS THIS?

For once in his life Jack did not feel a bit like laughing.

Mystery was not in his line at all.

He would almost have been willing to have given up his hundred dollars and his call on the second hundred to have found himself safely rid of Mr. Dunning Dobbs.

"Jump out, Jack," said the broker. "Take your banjo along."

Jack obeyed.

A big man with a fur cap now appeared and took charge of the team.

Mr. Dobbs hardly spoke to him, but passed directly into the house, followed by Jack, who was amazed a moment later to find himself in a well-furnished room, in which a table was spread with the finest of china and silver, with places for six guests.

It looked as though there was going to be a banquet.

The room was brilliantly lighted with many lamps, shielded by different colored shades, which gave it a very attractive appearance, the light being kept from shining outside by heavy curtains.

A cheerful wood fire burned on the open hearth, for the night was cool outside, and the whole aspect of the place was warm, comfortable and cheery to the last degree.

"Ha, Jack, I see you grinning. How do you like this?" exclaimed Mr. Dobbs. "About the cheese, eh? Isn't it so?"

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

The Navy Department was notified the other afternoon that Gov. Hunt of Arizona has decided that the super-dreadnought Arizona, which will be launched at the New York Navy Yard on June 19, shall be christened with water instead of wine. Arizona is in the Prohibition column. The dreadnought Kansas, named for another Prohibition State, was the last fighting ship to be christened with water.

J. B. Boggs, a farmer of Talbotton, Ga., reports a remarkable hen egg. He found one just a little larger than the ordinary egg, and when he broke it the usual yolk and white were found, but inside was another well-formed egg, just a little larger than a partridge egg. It had a shell and was shaped just like the other egg. The egg-shell with the little egg inside is on exhibition at Talbotton, Ga., at a hardware store.

Owen Kelley's cork leg instead of acting as a life preserver recently when he fell into the lake from the pier at the foot of East Ninth street, Cleveland, came very near being a life destroyer. Struggle as he would he could not raise his head to a level with his leg, which floated buoyantly. Commander Kelly, of the Ohio Naval Militia steamer the Dorothea, was coming ashore and dragged the drowning man out.

Natives hunting seals last winter are reported in mail advices received from Icy Cape, on the Arctic coast, near latitude 70, to have seen a white man marooned on an ice floe, which was drifting in a southwesterly direction toward Wrangell Island, Alaska. Whether the man was a member of Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Canadian Arctic expedition, or was a survivor of the wrecked whaling schooner New Jersey, the natives were unable to determine, but the general belief here and among the natives at Icy Cape is that the man was a member of the Stefansson party of three who started north over the ice from Martin Point, west of the Mackenzie River, April 7, 1914. With Stefansson at that time was Ole Anderson and Storker Storkerson.

George W. Childs Drexel, the Philadelphia sportsman and commodore of the Corinthian Yacht Club, is having built for himself the speed wonder of the 1915 crop of motor boats, a runabout which will be guaranteed to average thirty-two miles an hour. The boat will be called the Ace, and will be about 50 feet in length and will have a beam of about 7 feet 8½ inches. Her lines and general appearance as to construction of the hull, coupled with the immense power to be installed, give every indication that the new craft will be able to attain a speed of about thirty-five miles per hour. Two Loew Victor eight-cylinder high speed motors will be installed in the boat, each of which is rated at about 200 horse-power. The boat is about one-third completed, and will be ready for launching early in June.

It is safe to say that pure water may be drunk at any time and with hardly any limitations save such as might appeal to any one. Water is universally man's greatest and safest drink, and, rightly used, would in itself largely help to extend his life well toward the century mark. Food tastes better and is more agreeably relished by the water drinker than by those who drink wine at table. Strong liquors taken at all times confer no useful assistance in passing the dangers of life, and in self-interest it would be nearer to safety to let nature's provision for drink have full credit, as being the best, and accept no substitute. A good drink for man is pure water, and the ordinary drinking water of a country is, or should be, always appreciated by the dweller in that country.

Asphyxiating gas, which has been used with considerable success along the battle line, failed to assist the authorities materially in their efforts to capture Jean Boutet, an insane workman who tried to kill his wife, then barricaded himself in the cellar of his home at St. Ouen, on the outskirts of Paris. A lasso and "Wild West" methods proved more effective. Efforts of the police to drive Boutet out of the cellar were futile and an appeal was made to Paris. Firemen were sent from that city with the director of the city laboratory and gas was pumped into the cellar. One fireman equipped with a smoke helmet entered and tried to seize the madman, but soon crawled out half suffocated and without his helmet, which Boutet had pulled off. After a somewhat prolonged siege the workman was lassoed and carried off to an asylum.

In most countries it is easy for a man to enlist. There is, indeed, but one army in the world which is hard to enter, and that is the army of the United States. There is no great rush to enter the service, but there are always many more men offering than are needed. The physical test for applicants is extremely severe, while the applicant must have a fair education and proper certificates of character from at least two reputable persons. Less than a majority of those seeking to enter the service are native Americans, but it is required that every man enlisting shall at least have declared his intention of becoming a citizen of the United States, and the effort is, if possible, to obtain natives. The stripe of men applying is remarkably good. Re-enlistments are frequent, and as about half a score of non-commissioned officers receive commissions every year, the man that holds by the service has a chance to do well. Favoritism, it is said, is unknown in the matter of promotions from the ranks in the United States army. Of course, education, good manners and all other gifts naturally help a man forward in the army as elsewhere. Recruiting officers find that the chief thing that brings to them the kind of men they want is temporary embarrassment. The man who is a chronic ne'er-do-well has no chance whatever at a recruiting office, and the man of vicious habits is equally hopeless.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

A fish pond probably will soon be built on the State penal farm, Indiana, according to the trustees. Deer Creek passes through the farm and the trustees say they will stock the stream with game fish. The trustees say they want the prisoners on the farm to have some recreation. They are of the opinion that fishing will be about as good as any.

The shortage of doctors and surgeons in Austria is so alarming that the newspapers are urging medical men from nearby neutral countries to enter the Austrian service. At present, it is stated, there are only two doctors available for each thousand wounded men. Any neutral physician, the newspapers add, can get \$6 to \$7 a day, besides his food and lodging.

York Castle, which is being used as a place of detention for prisoners of war in England, is one of the finest of the nation's old buildings. It is well situated for its present purpose, being between the rivers Foss and Ouse. Its walls inclose no fewer than four acres, with space to contain 40,000 persons. The castle dates back certainly from Roman times, possibly from the days of the ancient Britons.

The United States has another new flag to be added to the only list of squared bunting that must be officially recognized. It is the flag of the Panama Canal, and consists of a blue square bearing the letter "P. C." in white, and will be used by all vessels in the marine equipment division of the canal. It will fly at the bows of launches when on official duty and on dress occasions and at the foremast head of tugs on duty.

Students paying all or part of their expenses through the University of Alabama earn something over \$5,000 a year for manual labor alone, according to W. M. Brunson, of Elba, Ala., chairman of the University Self-Help Bureau. The average for each of the forty students engaged in the work this year has been \$3 a week for work out of school hours or about \$110 for the year. During the summer school students usually earn about \$1,000.

The discovery has just been made at Colombo that cocoanut water, which has always been considered a useless waste product, is an excellent rubber coagulant. Millions of gallons of cocoanut water allowed to run to waste on estates can now be made use of at a good profit. The cocoanut water is allowed to ferment for four or five days, after which it can be used without further delay as coagulating latex. One to two ounces of the fermented cocoanut water is allowed to coagulate one pint of the pure latex. This is said to produce a fine rubber, superior to that procured with the use of crude acetic acid. The color of the rubber with acetic acid fermentation is decidedly inferior to the cocoanut water fermentation. Cocoanut water is now made up in bulk and shipped in large quantities from cocoanut plantations to the various rubber estates.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Teacher—Which is grammatically correct: "The wages of sin are death," or "The wages of sin is death?" Miss Prim—Don't you think, teacher, that "salary" is a more elegant term?

"Whar yo' boy now?" some one asked the old Georgia ducky. "De gover'mint's takin' care of him." "Dat so?" "Yes, suh! He's in the new Fed'ral prison, wid a nice gray suit on him."

"Are you at all familiar with Shelley?" he asked. "I should say not!" she indignantly replied. "I never have been familiar with any young man in my life, and I don't even know this person you speak of."

"Strange," said the first tramp meditatively, "how few of our youthful dreams ever come true!" "Oh, I dunno," said his companion; "I remember I used to dream about wearin' long pants, and now I guess I wear 'em longer than any one else in the country."

"What time will this train reach Perkins Junction?" asked a traveler on a short-line railroad in Missouri. "There ain't no telling," said the conductor affably. "Me and the engineer are going to get off down the road a piece and hunt rabbits for a spell."

Mr. Hunter (reading)—Huh! this advertisement says "Roomy flat to let." Talk about your "condensed lye!" Mrs. Hunter—How do you mean? Mr. Hunter—Well, if it's roomy it surely can't be a flat; if it's really a flat it can't be roomy; and if by some miracle it should be a roomy flat it wouldn't be "to let."

In crossing the ocean a father and son both became very seasick. The father recovered quickly, but the son was so exhausted with the attack that he sank into a state of apathy, from which it seemed impossible to arouse him. The steamer physician, thinking he would try a sudden shock, said: "I have bad news for you; your father is dead!" The son, raising his expressionless eyes to the doctor, replied: "Lucky man!"

THE OLD MILL.

By John Sherman

The old mill at Stonyhurst, on the coast of Maine, where the shore was particularly rocky and precipitous, had long been regarded as being haunted.

It had been disused for many years, and very few people visited it, not entirely because it was situated in an out-of-the-way place, though that was one reason, but because of the evil reputation which clung to it.

Old settlers said that a murder had been committed there years before, and that ghosts made it their dwelling place.

Be this as it might, it was a lonesome place, and if there was one spot on the whole coast line where the wind howled most dismally, and around which the winter storms centered most drearily, it was the rocky headland where the old mill stood.

Men would go considerably out of their way to avoid it, and on wild nights it was left completely desolate, no one caring to even gaze at it from a distance at such times.

At about the time when I first became interested in the mystery of the place, an event had happened which set the whole village in a ferment, and added considerably to the bad reputation of the old mill.

A young woman of the place was suddenly among the missing, and it was rumored that she had been murdered.

Her husband was arrested, but he denied all knowledge of her whereabouts, and seemed as anxious to determine them as any one in the village.

He told me in confidence, after his release on bail, that his wife had been out of her mind for some time, although he had kept the sad fact a close secret from the curious villagers, and that he had no doubt she had hidden herself somewhere, and would return after awhile.

About this time strange figures were to be seen hovering about the old mill at night, and shrieks and other weird sounds were heard, among which were recognized the tones of the young woman's voice.

One dark, tempestuous night, I myself, in passing the mill, whither I had gone to ascertain if I could fathom the mystery, saw a white-robed figure standing in the tumble-down doorway, which beckoned to me to come nearer.

With a hand on my revolver, I hurried forward, but with a shriek the creature disappeared within the walls of the dilapidated structure, and I was alone.

I waited around for some time, but saw nothing more of the weird figure, all being as silent as the grave.

I was hidden in the shadow of one of the walls and was about to take my departure, the hour being late, when I suddenly heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

Peering carefully out, I saw a man walking rapidly towards the low entrance of the mill, through which he presently disappeared.

I waited for some time, expecting that he would come out, but it was at least an hour before he did so, and then he walked so rapidly that I was unable to discover his identity without being seen myself.

I instantly connected this mysterious visit with the dis-

appearance of Mrs. Blake, the lady in question, but I was not at all certain that Blake was the man I had seen.

I said nothing to him about the matter, as in case he was guilty, I did not want to awaken his suspicions.

The next night, which was more wild and blustering than any for several weeks, I visited the old mill again, this time provided with a dark lantern.

As I came near, I saw the white, uncanny figure standing in the doorway as upon the previous evening.

I advanced quickly, flashing the light from my lantern over the weird object, flooding it with the white rays.

The figure was that of a young woman, clad in a sort of nightdress, her hair floating over her shoulders in a tangled mass.

She screamed as I threw the light upon her, and, to my surprise, I recognized the face of Mrs. Blake.

The elfish expression of her countenance left me no room for doubting her to be insane, and her unnatural laughter strengthened my belief that she was in that unhappy frame of mind.

As I advanced she retreated, but I followed her up closely, determined to have a word with her, and if possible induce her to return to the village.

She glared at me out of those glassy eyes, and as she retreated her footfalls made no sound, as though she had been a creature of the fancy.

I followed closely, but she eluded me, and when I came to a rude door, through which I had seen her disappear, I found it firmly barred upon the inside.

I called to her by name, but all the response I received was a shriek which fairly froze my blood.

Convinced that I could do no more that night, I retired, determining to come again and with assistance.

Having made this resolve, I retraced my steps, and had just reached the outside when I once more heard footsteps.

Dodging behind the projecting angle of the crumbling wall, I waited until the figure had passed me, when I flashed my lantern upon it for an instant.

In that brief space I was enabled to recognize the nocturnal visitor; and I must say that, despite my suspicions, I was considerably surprised.

The man was Blake, the husband of the poor maniac.

He evidently saw the flash of my lantern, for he turned quickly and looked towards the spot where I was hid.

He did not see me, of course, and at that moment there came a gleam of lightning, followed by a thunder-clap; he was apparently satisfied that the first light was due to the same cause, and, muttering an imprecation upon the storm, he passed on into the gloom which pervaded the whole place.

After he had gone a few paces I followed slowly, but when I reached the barred door I found it as I had done previously, and heard no sound.

Whether he had been admitted I knew not, but after waiting a long time, and neither seeing nor hearing anything, I again took my departure, returning to the village.

The next day nothing was seen of Blake, and as he was a steady man at his work, the event caused no little surprise, and speculation was rife as to what had become of him.

Taking two of the villagers into my confidence, sailors, both of them, and men that could be trusted, I told them what I had seen, and then proposed that we make a visit to the old mill, in company, that very night.

They acquiesced, and, accordingly, a little before midnight, we stood on the bluff, well wrapped up, for the weather was boisterous, and fully armed, as we knew not what foes we might encounter.

It had been whispered by the villagers, and the belief was also by one of my companions, a regular grizzled old seadog, that the mill was the resort of a band of smugglers, and for that reason we had armed ourselves, though I did not credit the notion for an instant.

However, in case the supposition should prove correct, it would be well enough to go prepared to meet dangerous enemies, and therefore I made no objection to the proposal that we should arm ourselves.

As we entered the mill and passed along the low, rubbish choked passages, we heard a scream that fairly made our hair stand on end.

We paused and drew our revolvers, for at that moment a fierce gust of wind swept by us and a bright light shone in our faces.

The rude door which I had before seen was suddenly burst open, and a flood of unearthly light was seen proceeding from some place beyond.

There was another scream, and a man in his shirt sleeves fell backwards upon the ground, his face upturned and his arms extended.

The weird light shone upon his pale face, and his long hair straggled out upon the cold stones, while a pool of blood formed quickly about his head and oozed slowly away.

Standing in the doorway, in the full glow of the white light, was the ghostly figure of the maniac, her hair blowing about her face and her hands extended as if to wave us away.

"Go away, go away!" she screamed. "The grave is no place for you! the tomb is not fit for creatures of flesh and blood!"

Scarcely knowing whether I was awake or dreaming, I advanced a pace and discovered an ax hanging by the side of the man who had fallen.

The man was Blake, and he had been struck upon the head and killed by the strange creature now before us.

One glance at his upturned face convinced me that he was lifeless, and that his wife had killed him was beyond question.

The old seadog now took hold of the matter.

"Why did you kill him?" he asked, stepping forward.

"Ha, ha! they say I killed him, but it's false; the devil which he aroused within me killed him!"

As she sped away we followed her, but suddenly the uncanny white light which had filled the place disappeared, and we were left in darkness.

I saw the gleam of a white figure flitting ahead of me, however, and I gave chase, being resolved to secure the unfortunate woman, and, if possible, learn her sad story.

Suddenly there was a scream and then a splash, and I paused just in time to prevent myself from falling down

an open trap, formerly used for lowering goods to the beach below.

Throwing the light of my lantern down the yawning chasm, I saw, far below, the white figure of the unfortunate maniac lying crushed and evidently lifeless at the bottom.

As we could not reach the unfortunate creature from the mill, we concluded to return and go below by descending the cliff and walking around the beach.

We found the body of Blake, and discovered several wounds, any one of which would have caused death.

He was not a bad-looking man naturally, being considered rather handsome, but now he looked so ghastly that a shudder went through my frame despite my efforts to control myself.

The two sailors took him down to the village, while I went around under the cliffs to find the woman and see if she still lived.

I discovered the place easily enough, but not a single trace of her body could be seen.

I was satisfied that she still lived, although it was a marvel to me that she had not been instantly killed by the fall.

Confident that I could do nothing satisfactorily until the morning, I returned to the village, and after finding that the body of poor Blake had been given to the coroner, went to my hotel and turned in, as the saying was in those parts.

During the morning I was made aware of some facts concerning Blake that gave me more of an insight into the case than I had before had.

His wife had considerable property in her own right, and this would be his at her death.

That was one point.

They never lived very happily together, and it was said that Blake would not have mourned much if she had died before her time.

It was said that in case his wife did die there was a widow in the village who would gladly marry him, and upon whom he had looked with more than neighborly interest.

I learned also that Mrs. Blake had not been insane until recently, but that her husband's cruel treatment had driven her so.

We found the body of the poor woman the next day, the tide having washed it out to sea and cast it again upon the coast.

Years afterwards I was called to the deathbed of a criminal who wished to make a confession.

Among other matters, he told me that Blake had hired him to convey his wife to the old mill and keep her a close prisoner until her mind gave way, when she was to be taken to a distant asylum and entered under an assumed name.

In the meantime Blake, having given out that his wife was dead, intended to live on her money and enjoy himself.

He went to the mill every night, and by his heartless abuse soon turned the woman completely mad, her previous mental condition having been very nearly approaching insanity.

NEWS OF THE DAY

Twelve hundred men and boys were thrown out of work of the Maxwell colliery of the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Company, at Ashley, Pa., when 100 doorboys and patchers decided to strike, in order to play baseball. The action was taken when Burgess J. K. P. Fenner of the borough notified the boys that Sunday baseball would be prohibited in the future. The boys replied that they will keep the colliery idle every Saturday to play ball if the order is enforced. The colliery officials were unable to effect a settlement.

A travel course in physiography is an interesting item in the programme of the forthcoming summer session of Columbia University. This course will take the form of a physiographic excursion to the western United States, conducted by Prof. D. W. Johnson, lasting about two months. The party will visit the Devil's Tower, Yellowstone National Park, Glacier National Park, Crater Lake, the Yosemite Valley, Royal Gorge of the Arkansas, the Pike's Peak region, and probably also Lassen Peak and the Lake Bonneville region. The start is to be made from New York in July.

The religious creeds of the several presidents are here indicated: Washington, Episcopalian; John Adams, Unitarian; Jefferson, non-sectarian; Madison, Episcopalian, as was Monroe; J. Q. Adams, Unitarian; Jackson, Presbyterian; Van Buren, Reformed Dutch; Harrison and Tyler, Episcopalian; Polk, Presbyterian; Taylor, Episcopalian; Fillmore, Unitarian; Pierce, Episcopalian; Buchanan, Presbyterian; Lincoln, Presbyterian; Johnson, Grant and Hayes, Methodists; Garfield, Disciples; Arthur, Episcopalian; Cleveland and Harrison, Presbyterian; McKinley, Methodist; Roosevelt, Dutch Reformed; Taft, Unitarian, and Wilson, Presbyterian.

Seven million two hundred thousand roses are blooming on a single hedge surrounding a thirty-acre orange grove near Los Angeles, Cal. The estimate was made by J. L. Matthews, chairman of the county board of forestry, when the blossoms indicated nearly double the quantity of previous seasons. The hedge is eight feet high and four feet across the top. In it are La France, La Marque, Henrietta and Papa Gontier varieties. The property is owned by George W. Griffith. Matthews figured the total number of buds by carefully counting them on a squared section. So far as known this establishes a new record for quantity of roses on one hedge, even in southern California, where they grow in greatest profusion.

A Cape of Good Hope penny postage stamp, issue of 1861, red and creased, brought \$77.50 at a sale recently in the Collectors' Club, New York, and a vermilion pair of the same year brought \$88. A pair of fourpenny stamps of the same year sold for \$71, and a Cape fourpenny

stamp in gray blue brought \$76. Buyers paid \$43.50 for a ten-shilling Lagos brown-violet stamp of 1885; \$73 for a one-shilling New Brunswick red-violet stamp of 1851; \$54 for a one-shilling of 1851, and \$72.50 for a one-shilling dull violet of the same year. Sixty-six Sicilian Bomba head stamps were in the sale, choice specimens of which brought from \$27 to \$41. W. S. Scott conducted the sale for J. C. Morgenthau & Co.

Winding up their trip, which has been a triumph from coast to coast, the New York National basket ball team arrived home recently. The players, all of whom hail from the Rockaways, left New York three months ago and played their opening game at Wilkes-Barre, Pa. From there they worked their way out to San Francisco. The tour covered over 10,000 miles. Forty-five games were played and forty-four won. The strongest teams throughout the Middle West, where basket ball is popular, were played. Since their return the members of the team have been receiving congratulations from all over the country. Rockaway Beach has been holding a week of celebrations in honor of the players. The record of the New York Nationals will stand for many years, and it is doubtful if it has ever been equaled in any line of sport. The feat is even more remarkable from the fact that all the games were played upon strange floors.

The largest game preserve in the world is the continent of Africa—extending from the twentieth degree of north latitude down to the northern borders of Cape Colony and Natal. This great scheme was made possible by a treaty co-operation of England, Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal, Italy and Spain, by which it is provided that the hunting and destruction of vultures, secretary birds, owls, giraffes, gorillas, chimpanzees, mountain zebras, wild asses, white-tailed gnus, elands and the little Liberian hippopotami are absolutely prohibited. Similar protection is given the young of certain animals, including the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, antelope, gazelle, ibex and chevrotain, and to the adults of these species when accompanied by their young. Particular stress is laid on the protection of young elephants, and elephant tusks weighing less than twenty pounds will be confiscated. The eggs of the ostrich and of many other birds are protected, but those of the crocodile, python and poisonous snakes are to be destroyed. Even lions, leopards, hyenas, harmful monkeys and large birds of prey may not be slaughtered at the hunter's will. Hunters are required to take out licenses, and the number of animals each may kill is limited. The use of nets and pitfalls is forbidden, nor may explosions be used for killing fish. The main object of this vast protective enterprise is economic, to encourage the domestication of the elephant, zebra and ostrich, and to husband the trade in wild animal products, which were threatened by the rapacity of market hunters and so-called sportsmen.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

GERALDINE FARRAR TO ACT FOR THE MOVIES.

The announcement was made the other day by the Lasky Feature Play Company that they had obtained the services of Geraldine Farrar, the Metropolitan prima donna, to appear before the moving picture camera in several of her most popular roles. Miss Farrar will return to New York at the close of the tour of the Metropolitan Company to make some records for a talking machine company. She will leave for the Lasky studios at Hollywood, California, June 15, in a special car provided for her. The diva's father and mother, and Mr. and Mrs. Morris Gest will accompany her. In Hollywood a villa has been leased for her use. Her contract covers a period of several seasons, and this summer she will be engaged eight weeks in giving characterizations of several of her most famous roles. For her services she will receive, it is said, a salary that will amount to \$2 a minute while she is before the camera.

JAPANESE BREACH OF PROMISE SUIT.

Japan's highest court has awarded to Miss Hede Nozawa \$10,000 for breach of promise. Not only is this the first breach of promise case in Japan, but the court has taken a long step forward in recognition of the rights of women, who under the old regime were considered more or less as chattels, as they still are in most parts of the Orient. A marriage is not valid in Japan unless registered, and registration is not compulsory or even usual. Miss Nozawa had consented to share Sozohira Vanaka's house on the condition that their union be entered on the records. Vanaka put the matter off for a month; then left the house after a quarrel. Instead of yielding to circumstances in the meek Oriental way, Miss Nozawa sued. One court threw her case out. She took it to another and lost again. Undiscouraged, she went to the highest tribunal in the land. Witnesses who had arranged the union appeared for her and the result was damages amounting in Japan to a small fortune.

ABOUT WAR STAMPS.

The great struggle in Europe is furnishing stamp collectors with numerous stamps of a provisional character, says the American Boy. The most striking change is found in the stamps of certain German colonies which have been surcharged for use by the English-French occupation forces.

The German colonial possessions of Samoa and Togo, with the familiar ship design, have been overprinted in a very substantial manner, indicating the passing of these islands from the control of Germany to England. These stamps are very scarce, only a small number having been overprinted, and they will no doubt give way to New Zealand stamps surcharged for use in these two possessions.

Another war set may be found in the set of German stamps surcharged with the word "Belgien" and with the value in centimes. This set is common and the four varieties can be obtained for about 25 cents.

The Indian troops in France are provided with a set of the current King George India overprinted "I. E. F.," meaning "India Expeditionary Force."

Various charity stamps have been issued, notably by France, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Russia. Most of these stamps are face value, the excess amount being used in connection with relief work.

France has issued a permanent Red Cross stamp. The design is similar to the ordinary 10-cent, but the value has been placed higher up and in the lower left corner there is a tablet bearing a plus sign and 5c. With a nominal face value of 2 cents, the stamp is sold for 3 cents.

ST. SOPHIA.

It has been reported that the Turkish military authorities will probably surrender Constantinople to the Allies rather than have the city undergo a bombardment from the Dardanelles. A desire to protect beautiful St. Sophia from injury is said to have influenced this decision. This mosque, originally a Christian church, is the crowning triumph of Byzantine architecture. At the command of the Emperor Justinian it was erected early in the sixth century, the first stone being laid in the year 532 A. D., on the site of the two older churches, the first of which was built by the great Constantine. Not long after St. Sophia was completed the edifice was damaged by an earthquake which shook down most of the dome. In the repair and restoration which followed the church was enlarged and ennobled. The present dome rises at its center 180 feet above the ground and has a diameter of 107 feet; however, its curve is so slight that its depth at the center is only 46 feet. Around its rim are forty windows, while underneath are several tiers of galleries supported by gold arches resting upon many colored pillars, some of which have been brought as plunder from distant temples. In 1453 Mahomet converted St. Sophia into a mosque, adding minarets at the external angles of the building and making changes in its interior. These consisted chiefly in the destruction or concealment of the Christian mosaics which adorned the walls. Should a Christian power permanently occupy the city, doubtless these mosaics would be restored and brought to light again. In contrast with the notable churches and cathedrals of Central Europe the exterior of St. Sophia is most disappointing, being baldly proportioned and uncouth in appearance. It is the interior of the mosque which has made it famous. Its many flights of domes and semi-domes, its vistas of arches and columns, and finally the great shallow bowl of its central dome, all decorated in the lavish coloring of the Orient, give an effect of bewildering beauty.

ROUGH RIDER DISC PISTOLS.

Made of nicely colored wood 5 1/4 inches long. The power is furnished by rubber bands. Ten discs of cardboard with each pistol. Price, 6c. each, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MAGIC PIPE.

Made of a regular corn-cob pipe, with rubber figures inside; by blowing through the stem the figure will jump out. Made in following figures: rabbits, donkeys, cats, chickens, etc.

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Foxy Grandpa, Mr. Peewee and other comical faces artistically colored, to which is attached a long rubber tube, connected with a rubber ball, which can be filled with water, the rubber ball being carried in the pocket, a slight pressure on the bulb causes a long stream, the result can easily be seen.

Price, 15c.,

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Made of decorated enameled metal, representing an exact flash pocket lighter; by pressing a button instead of the bulb's eye, an electrically lighted up stream of water is ejected into the face of the spectator; an entirely new and amusing novelty.

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The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about. Price, 10c.

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FINGER MOUSE.

We need hardly tell you about this great novelty. It has proven one of the greatest sellers ever put on the market. The men on the street have sold nearly a million, and every day the demand for them is growing.

The head is like a mouse in every respect. The "body" is also like a mouse but is hollow, allowing the index finger to slip into it. While you are sitting at the dinner table, one of your friends who is "in on the trick" says she just saw a mouse and a moment or two after the head of the mouse is seen to creep up over the edge of the table. Can you imagine the surprise and consternation? There are a thousand other stunts you can play with this mouse, such as slipping it out of your sleeve, your pockets, etc. This trick is very popular with the ladies. Price by mail, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

CHANGING MONEY TRICK BOX.

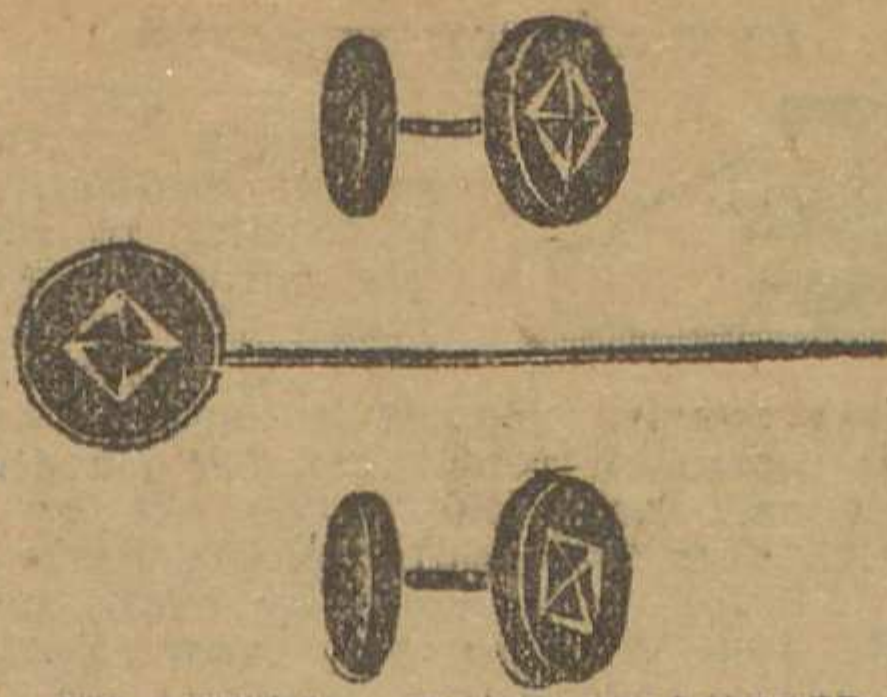
With this trick box you can make money change, from a penny into a dime or vice versa. Also make dimes appear and disappear at your command. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

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This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old.

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A Brand-New Trick, Just Out.—Puzzling, Mystifying and Perplexing. A metal ring is handed around for examination, and is found to be solid, unbroken japanned iron. A cane, a pencil or a string is held tightly at each end by a spectator. The performer lightly taps the cane with the ring, and the ring suddenly is seen to be encircling the cane. How did the ring pass the spectator's two hands and get on the cane? The most mystifying trick ever invented. Others charge 75 cents for this trick; but our price, including instruction, is 12c., postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

THE DANCING NIGGER.

A comical toy with which you can have no end of fun. It consists of a cut-out figure fastened to a thread suspended between the ends of a spring. By pressing the wires between the fingers and thumb the figure will dance in the funniest manner. Price 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

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Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickeled brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.



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It consists of three horseshoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horseshoe from the two linked horseshoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known. Price, by mail, 10c. each.

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The party who monkeys with this pencil suddenly finds it falling to pieces in his hands. You can scare the wits out of him by saying he will have to pay for it. But it is easy to assemble the pencil again in readiness for another victim. You can have 60 yards of joy to the minute with this innocent-looking little device. Price, 15c. each, by mail, postpaid.
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This puzzle is a wonder. It consists of two pieces of wood. A hole is bored through the upper end of both. A red string passes through the holes. Take a knife, insert it between the wooden blocks and cut upwards. You separate the pieces of wood, and the string is apparently cut in two. Close the blocks together, seize an end of the string, and you can pull the entire cord through the holes, absolutely—not cut. Very mystifying. Price, 12c. each, by mail, postpaid.
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PERPLEXITY PUZZLE



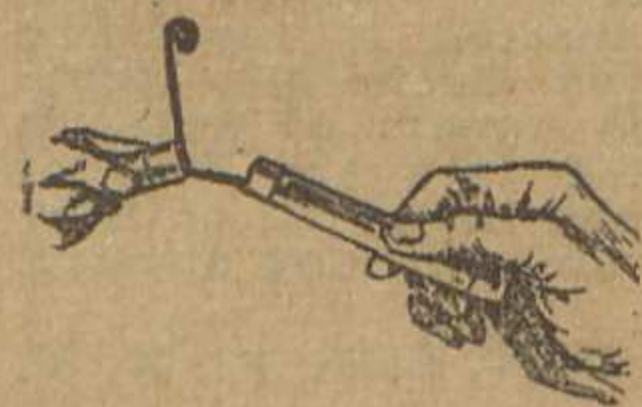
One of the most exasperating puzzles, calculated to make a saint swear. It is very hard to do this puzzle, but it can be done. It is made of highly nicked metal. The trick is to so arrange the buttons in the slots that the letters spell the word "perplexity." Your chance of succeeding is very slim until you get the hang of the thing. Price 15c. each, by mail, postpaid.
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Sometimes your jocosely friend helps himself to the pencil sticking up from your vest pocket. Let him take this one. When he attempts to use it, a pair of springs shoot out and rap him so smartly on the knuckles that he swears-off taking other people's property. A dandy little trick affording no end of amusement. Price, 10c. each, by mail, postpaid.
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